2010 Wii & DS PREVIEW

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Red Steel 2
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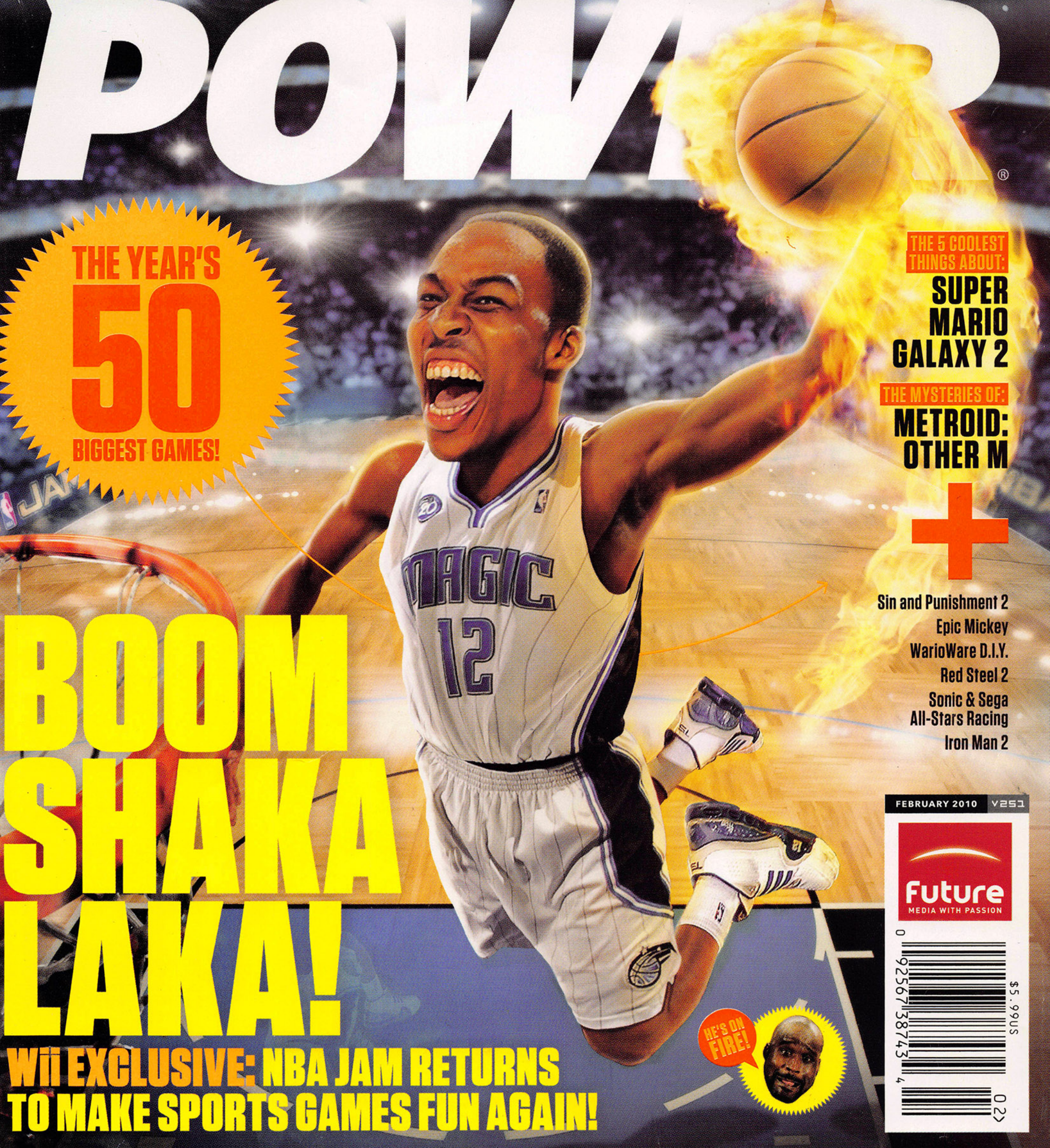
Iron Man 2


MAGIC
12
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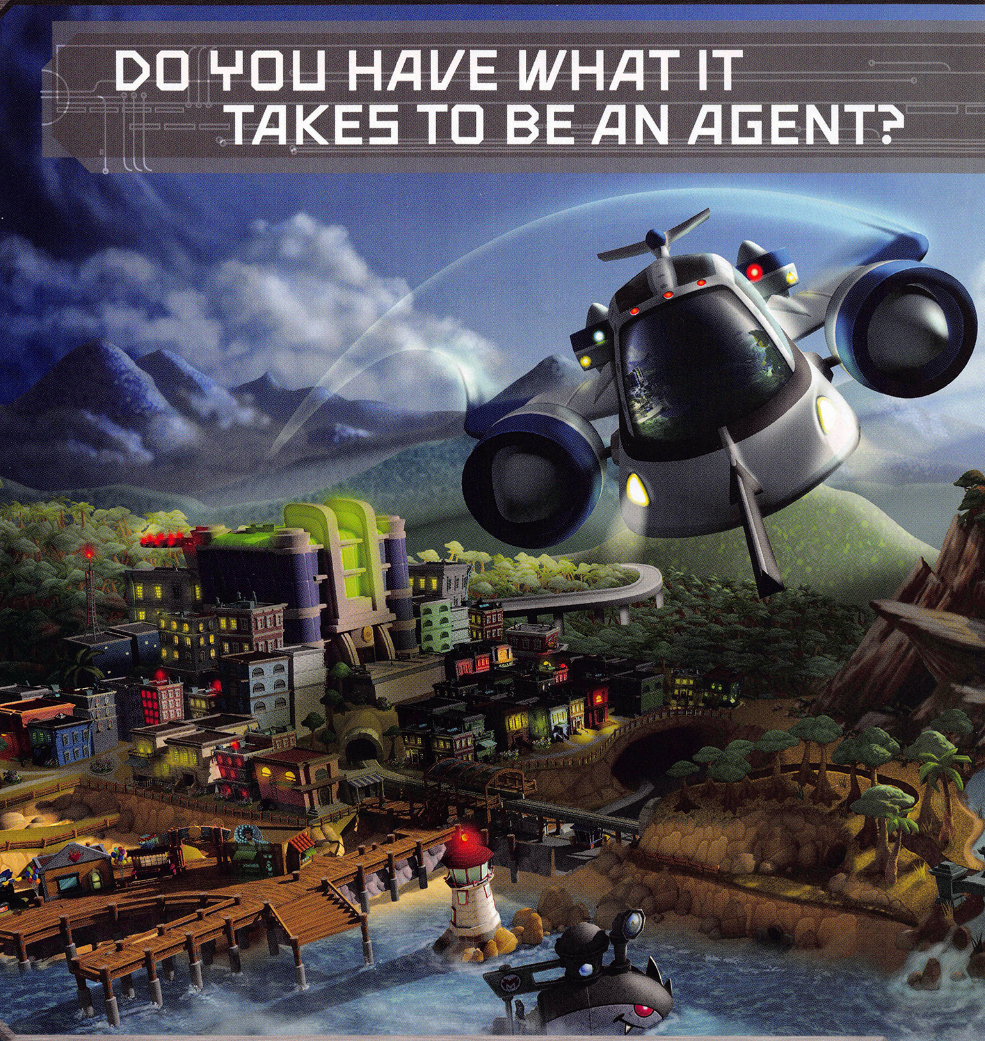
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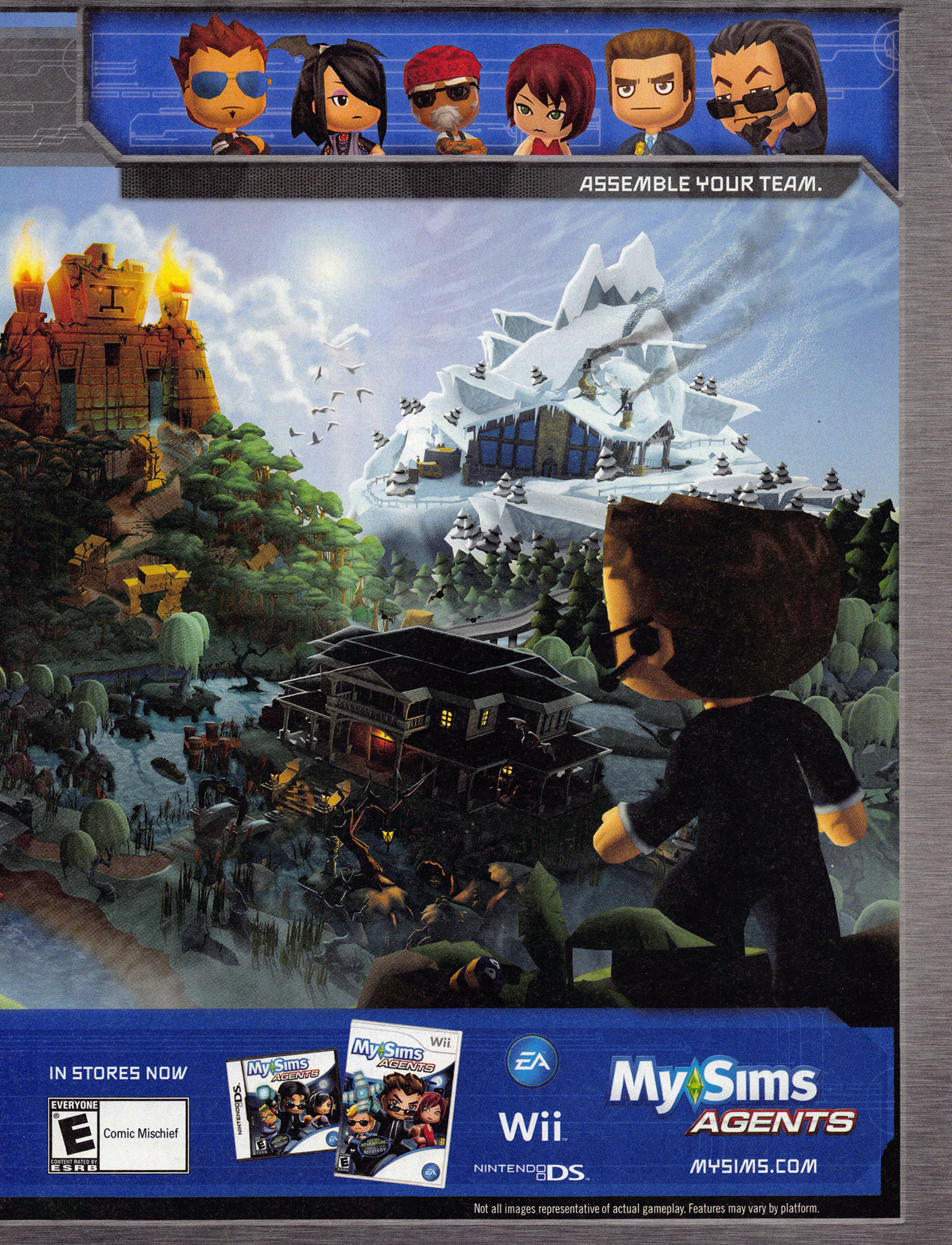

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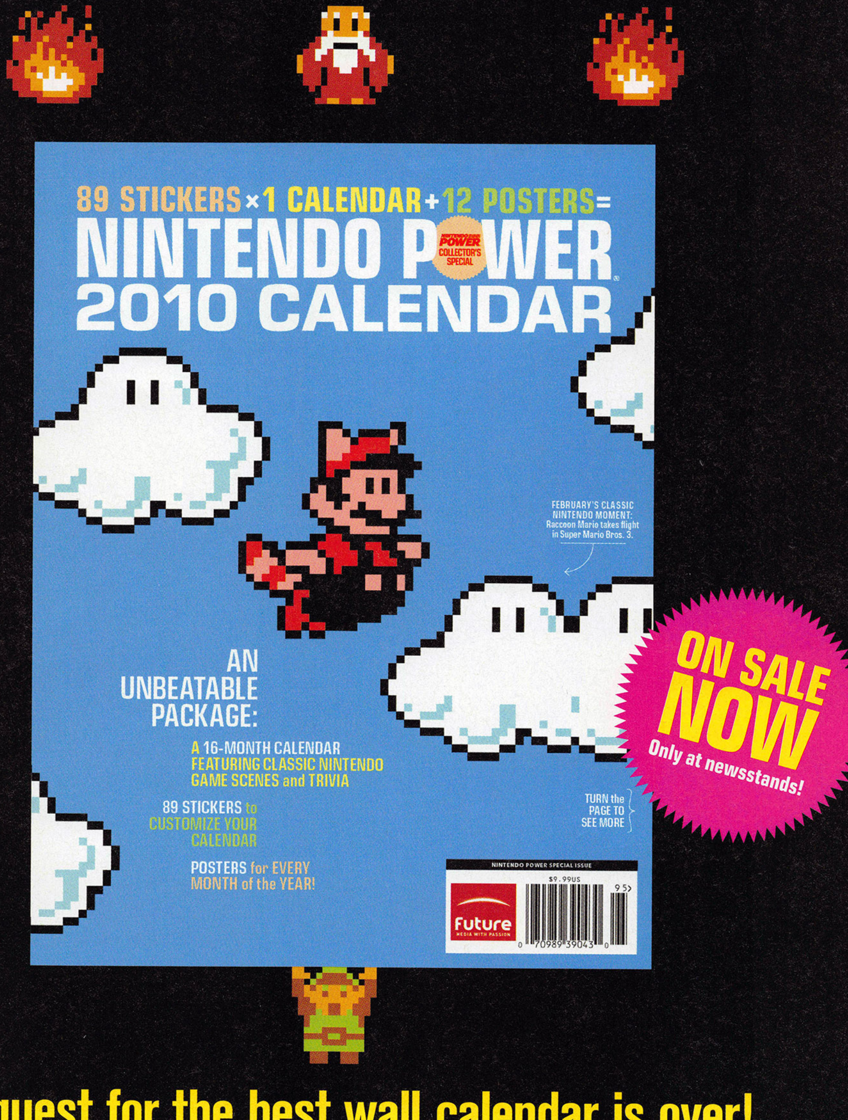

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CONTENTS

Our guide to the biggest upcoming Wii and Nintendo DS games starts on page 26!

2010
THE YEAR IN PREVIEW

FEATURES

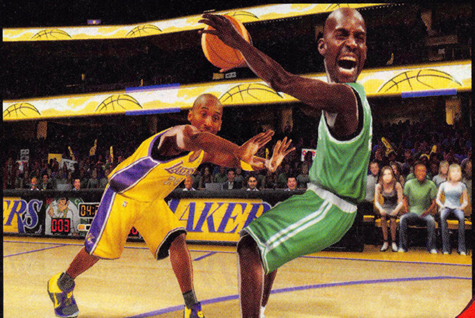
Boom Shakalaka! 28
Exclusive! Arcade mega-hit NBA Jam is back and it's on Wii!

A New Lease on Death 44
Don't be afraid! Ghost Trick is Capcom's next big DS title.

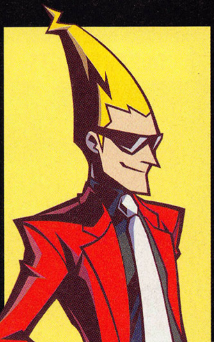
Heir to the Throne 52
A classic tale reinvented on Wii—The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest.

Mad About the Mouse 62
Go behind the scenes of Epic Mickey for Wii.

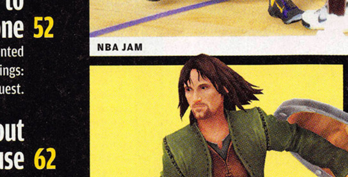
The Demon Whisperer 70
We interview the director of Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey for DS.



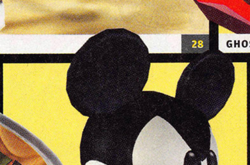
NBA JAM 28



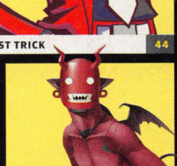
GHOST TRICK 44



THE LORD OF THE RINGS: ARAGORN'S QUEST 52



EPIC MICKEY 62



SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: STRANGE JOURNEY 70

NINTENDO POWER

CONTENTS

FEBRUARY 2010

NEWS PROJECT MONSTER 10

DOWNLOAD FROBOT 14

DEPARTMENTS

Pulse 6

News 10

Download 14

Previews !

This month, Previews is replaced by our 2010 Year in Preview—check it out on page 26!

Power Profiles 80

Playback 84

Reviews 87

Bejeweled Twist 91

Glory of Heracles 90

Pinball Hall of Fame: The Gottlieb Collection 91

Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars 88

Community 94

Next Month 96

POWER PROFILES RIEKO KODAMA 80

REVIEW TATSUNOKO VS. CAPCOM: ULTIMATE ALL-STARS 88

GAME INDEX

A Boy and his Blob: Trouble on Blobolonia (VC)	22
Ace Attorney Investigations: Miles Edgeworth (DS)	48
Again (DS)	43
And Yet It Moves (WW)	18
Arc Rise Fantasia (Wii)	77
Army Defender (DW)	24
Ball Fighter (DW)	24
Bejeweled Twist (DS)	91
Bejeweled Twist (DW)	24
Bit.Trip Void (WW)	20
Blaster Master (VC)	22
Blue Dragon: Awakened Shadow (DS)	68
Bonk: Brink of Extinction (WW)	18
Bookworm (DW)	24
Calling (Wii)	58
Castle of Magic (DW)	24
Cave Story (WW)	20
Christmas Clix (WW)	20
The Combatribes (VC)	22
Copter Crisis (WW)	20
Deca Sports DS (DS)	48
Dementium II (DS)	38
Diatomic (WW)	20
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Reverie (DS)	58
Dragon Quest IX (DS)	79
Earthworm Jim 2 (VC)	22
Electroplankton Lumiloop (DW)	24
Electroplankton Luminarrow (DW)	24
Electroplankton Marine-Crystals (DW)	24
Electroplankton Sun-Animalcule (DW)	24
Electroplankton Varvoice (DW)	24
Endless Ocean: Blue World (Wii)	57
Epic Mickey (Wii)	62
Etrian Odyssey III (DS)	12
Flip's Twisted World (Wii)	69
Flowerworks (WW)	20
Foto Face: The Face Stealer Strikes (DW)	24
Foto Showdown (DS)	74
Fragile Dreams: Farewell Ruins of the Moon (Wii)	36
Frobot (WW)	14
Ghost Trick (DS)	44
Glory of Heracles (DS)	90
Golden Sun DS (DS)	65
The Grinder (Wii)	39
Harvest Moon: My Little Shop (WW)	20
Infinite Space (DS)	77
Iron Man 2 (Wii, DS)	66
La-Mulana (WW)	16
Last Window: Midnight Promise (DS)	11
The Legend of Zelda Wii (Wii)	79
Liight (WW)	18
Line Attack Heroes (Wii)	69
Little Tournament Over Yonder (WW)	21
Littlest Pet Shop (DW)	25
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest (Wii, DS)	52
Lost in Shadow (Wii)	58
Lufia 2: Rise of the Sinistrals (DS)	12
Magnetis (WW)	21
Major League Baseball 2K10 (Wii)	65
Master of Illusion Express: Matchmaker (DW)	25
Master of Illusion Express: Mind Probe (DW)	25
Mega Man 10 (WW)	18
Metroid II: Return of Samus (GB)	84
Metroid: Other M (Wii)	73
Miami Nights: Life in the Spotlight (DW)	25
Military Madness: Nectaris (WW)	18
Moki Moki (WW)	21
Monado: Beginning of the World (Wii)	42
Monster Hunter Tri (Wii)	60
My Dolphin (WW)	21
My Zoo (WW)	21
NBA Jam (Wii)	28
NightSky (WW)	18
Okamiden (DS)	79
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney (WW)	18
Picross 3D (DS)	42
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Gottlieb Collection (Wii)	91
Pokémon HeartGold Version	75
Pokémon SoulSilver Version	75
Pop Island (DW)	25
Project Monster (DS)	10
Puzzle Quest 2 (DS)	69
Racquet Sports (Wii)	12
Ragnarok DS (DS)	42
Rayman (DW)	25
Red Steel 2 (Wii)	49
Reflection (DW)	18
Rooms: The Main Building (Wii, DS)	36
Rubik's Puzzle Galaxy: RUSH (WW)	21
Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love (Wii)	76
Sengoku Basara Samurai Heroes (Wii)	38
Shantae: Risky's Revenge (DW)	18
Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey (DS)	70
Shinobi (VC)	22
Shiren the Wanderer (Wii)	74
Sin and Punishment 2 (Wii)	40
Solomon's Key (VC)	22
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing (Wii, DS)	47
Sonic Classic Collection (DS)	11
Span Smasher (Wii)	48
Stop Stress: A Day of Fury (WW)	21
Street Fighter Alpha 2 (VC)	22
Stunt Cars (WW)	21
Sudoku Challenge! (DW)	25
Super Mario Galaxy 2 (Wii)	37
Super Mario Kart (VC)	22
Super Meat Boy (WW)	18
Super Monkey Ball Step & Roll (Wii)	68
Tales of Monkey Island Chapter 4: The Trial and Execution of Guybrush Threepwood (WW)	21
Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars (Wii)	88
Trauma Team (Wii)	43
WarioWare D.I.Y. (DS)	65
Yummy Yummy Cooking Jam (DW)	25
Zangeki no ReginLeiv (Wii)	11

DS = NINTENDO DS
DW = DSiWARE
GB = GAME BOY
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
WW = WiiWARE

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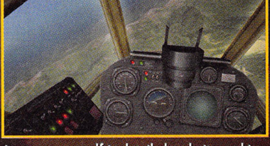

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Pulse

It's 2010 Already?

Chris Slate

As I sat down this month to write about gaming in 2010, it suddenly occurred to me that 10 years have passed since everyone was playing N64, carrying around a Game Boy Color, and worrying about Y2K. Futuristic video games used to take place in the year 2010, and now, here we are! As I look back at the 21st century's first decade, a lot of big Nintendo gaming moments stand out: the Game Boy line came to an end; Sega stopped making game systems and Sonic jumped to GameCube; and Nintendo DS and Wii broke all records and revolutionized the way we play. And, of course, we received countless new classic games. What will the big stories be for the next 10 years? Which systems will one day replace Wii and DS? Which titles will continue to evolve what video games can be? It's going to be a fun journey, and it all begins on page 26 with our ginormous 2010 Year in Preview. See you...*in the future*!

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

Wii
MEGA MAN 10
WORLD EXCLUSIVE: Retro Mega Man is back! New levels! New features! And... Sheep Man?
250th ISSUE!
NINTENDO POWER
250
REASONS TO LOVE NINTENDO

V250 **JANUARY 2010**

Chris Slate here, back once again to answer your letters while flying toward the rim (now *that's* hang time, baby!). But first, this month's special letter request: what would *guarantee* that 2010 is your best year ever for Nintendo gaming? Send your responses to the address on page 8, and we'll print the best ones!

LETTERS

GETTING AHEAD OF OURSELVES

I love Nintendo Power, but when I got the September issue in July it made me feel that my summer vacation was coming to an end. This is just a small complaint, and for all I know, you could have no control over this. But if you can, please release the isssues closer to the month that they are meant for. **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

I know just what you mean, guy or gal who forgot to sign his or her name. As I sit here working on the February 2010 issue, it's only mid-December. I can barely tell what year it is anymore! Alas, such is the world of print, where the cover dates on magazines have always been a month or so ahead and will likely continue to be that way. Just ignore 'em.

WHAT ABOUT YOSHI?

I saw the comments in Vol. 248 about Luigi deserving more attention. I agree, but what about Mario's other green sidekick, Yoshi? It's true that he's had his own games, but they were either puzzle games or he had Baby Mario on his back the whole time! Mario doesn't even treat Yoshi that great, either. In Super Mario World, Mario would usually jump off of Yoshi if he missed his jump and let the poor guy plummet to the ground (or spikes, or whatever's down there). **—KEEGAN**

ANOTHER "NEW" IDEA

A game that would completely blow my mind would be New Legend of Zelda. I mean, *come on*—I can't be the only person who has thought of this. It would be just like New Super Mario Bros.: an all-new title based on the gameplay of an 8-bit classic. How cool would that be?! **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

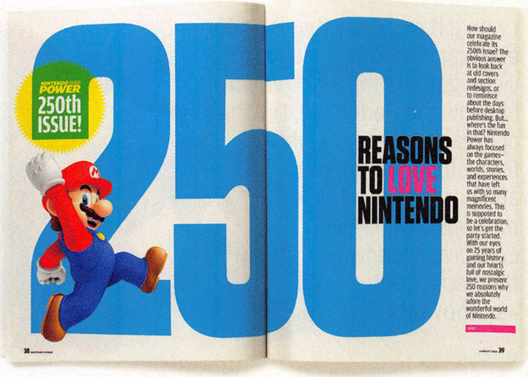
That would be *very* cool! I could see it as an alternative series that exists alongside the mainline Zelda games just as New Super Mario Bros. Wii sits next to Super Mario Galaxy. Classic dungeon layouts? Retro-style secrets? Paint the game card gold, and I'm in!

IT'S GOOD TO BE KING

Why does Chris Slate get to review all the big games, such as Super Smash Bros. Brawl and Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story? I know he's editor in chief, but come on! **—GARRETT H.**

Shhh! I still haven't told the other guys that Bowser's Inside Story came in for review!

Wow, it's already your 250th issue?! You guys gave out information on Nintendo games before anyone else, and you're still going strong! Thank you for putting care into every page you print, and thanks to Nintendo for producing mind-blowing games. I'm looking forward for many more issues to come! —**TRAVIS L.S.**



NINTENDO POWER 250th ISSUE!

250 REASONS TO LOVE NINTENDO

How should our magazine celebrate its 250th issue? The obvious answer is to look back at old covers and section redesigns, or to reminisce about the days before desktop publishing. But... where's the fun in that? Nintendo Power has always focused on the games—the characters, worlds, stories, and experiences that have left us with so many magnificent memories. This is supposed to be a celebration, so let's get the party started. With our eyes on 25 years of gaming history and our hearts full of nostalgic love, we present 250 reasons why we absolutely adore the wonderful world of Nintendo.

C'mon, Cynthia—where's *my* Mario costume? I need the free ice cream!

MARIO FOR A DAY

For my husband's Halloween birthday this year, we went to Disney World and he wore a Super Mario costume (that I made for him) all day. He was more popular than the Disney characters we saw! Little kids were awestruck, and the adults loved it, too! He posed for pictures with some of the families there, and one of the vendors gave him free ice cream. It was so entertaining to hear children whisper to their parents, "Mommy, it's Mario" as we walked by. After seeing firsthand how much more popular Mario was than the Disney characters at Disney World, I think Nintendo should make a theme park! Imagine the Mushroom Kingdom brought to life, and a roller coaster that goes through Bowser's Castle. It would be awesome, and I think the mass amount of people that loved my husband's costume would agree. —**CYNTHIA**

I think you've stumbled onto something huge, Cynthia. Imagine getting that level of admiration, popularity, and free ice cream...all the time! I'm done with being regular old Chris Slate. As soon as I can find a pair of blue overalls, it's Mario full-time from now on!

TERRIBLE TREASURE

I really hate monster chests in RPGs. Why would any title include a gameplay mechanic that makes players want to avoid treasure chests? —**LIGHTFLAME**

CUCKOO FOR CUCCOS

Were you guys kidding in Volume 249 when you claimed that hitching a ride on a Cucco was not one of the coolest stylin' rides? I think it's one of the greatest things in the Zelda games! In Twilight Princess, where would we have been without those annoying little chickens when we wanted to know exactly what was on that irritating moving platform near Fyer's cannon? And, a few meters away, how would we have been able to find that Poe and rip out the piece of soul it was hiding? Personally, I think that any chicken that is strong enough to carry an epic hero and his Iron Boots and Ball and Chain deserves our respect. —**LATIAS SAPHIRA**

KEEP ON TRUCKIN'

Hey, guys, I might have just come up with the next Zelda game for the DS: it's called The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Trucks. Link sets off on an adventure as a truck driver, delivering goods across Hyrule, armed with nothing but a transceiver. His companion, NaVigate 2.0, is the world's most powerful (yet surprisingly annoying) GPS system. "Hey! Listen! Make a legal U-turn! Watch out!" And Link's nemesis? Traffic Jamondorf. "I text while driving" is one of his best lines! —**PERKINSKI**

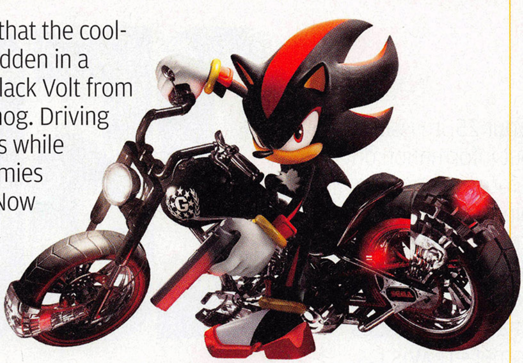
DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

In Vol. 246, the "Guidance of the Guru" sidebar seemed to put Captain Falcon in a bad light. Captain Falcon is one of the coolest and most manly characters that Nintendo has ever produced. After researching the Falcon Punch's properties, I have found that it is the one weapon in the universe that can completely destroy matter. Captain Falcon is not to be ridiculed, and he probably has you all in his sights at this very moment, waiting for the punch. —**(NO NAME GIVEN)**

The Hoff says: These statements are so erroneous I hardly know where to begin! First, even though we call Captain Falcon a bona fide Pikmin-killing jerk, we actually mean that as the highest compliment (as evidenced by our list of top 20 heroes last issue). Second, there are plenty of things that can completely destroy matter, including Mr. T's fists, a blast from Chris Shepperd's cyborg eye, and every last inch of Steven Seagal.

I would have to say that the coolest thing I've ever ridden in a video game is the Black Volt from Shadow the Hedgehog. Driving at breakneck speeds while trying to target enemies and not get killed? Now *that* was a wild ride! *Long live Shadow the Hedgehog!*

—SHADOWGIRL



WHAT IS THE COOLEST VEHICLE YOU'VE EVER DRIVEN OR RIDDEN IN A VIDEO GAME?

The coolest vehicle I've ever seen in a game is definitely the Six Machine from the Viewtiful Joe series. It's equipped with all kinds of weapons, has a mind of its own, can transform, and can even act as the cockpit for a giant robot! **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

The best vehicle I've ever used in a game would have to be Wolf's ship in Star Fox Assault for GameCube. When I unlocked that in multiplayer, it was the coolest thing ever! Just the look of the ship was amazing! And as soon as my friends and I discovered how great and effective it was, there was never one left on the ground. **—AHLERSKID**

I really enjoyed the Spinner in The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess. I found it quite fun to spin from one track to another; it gave a new feel to the game. And because of it, the fight with Stallord was one of my favorite boss battles! I hope they bring it back for the next installment! **—SEAN M.**

The best thing I've ever ridden in a video game was a liopleurodon in Scribblenauts. It killed me afterward, but it was fun. **—THE ESSENCE OF THE TRIFORCE**

The coolest vehicle ever is Captain Falcon's amazing machine, the Blue Falcon. With its sleek body and brilliant blue coat of paint, this smooth beast is more awesome than Mr. T. and cooler than Vanilla Ice. Using it to slide past Dr. Stewart and jet in front of Samurai Goroh is oh so satisfying. **—ZELDARIO METROX III**

When it comes to the coolest vehicle of any game, one thing comes to mind: the dolphin from Crystalis. It was the most original method of transport I've seen; you could fight while riding, and you could call it from practically anywhere. And besides, who wouldn't want to jump on a dolphin and ride across the sea, shouting "Hi-ho Flipper, away?" **—JKALTMIX**

The Extreme Gear hoverboards in Sonic Riders were the coolest things I've ever ridden. They were fast, futuristic, fast, came in awesome colors, and were superstreaking *fast*! Next, I might choose Link's train in Spirit Tracks—it looks pretty cool. **—JOSHUA P.**

You can't go wrong with the car from Chibi-Robo. Who doesn't love jumping around in it with the push of a button? **—FISHERSPOT**

In my opinion, the coolest vehicle would have to be Bowser in Bowser's Inside Story. The bros. used Bowser to go all over the Mushroom Kingdom and get to places they never could have reached without him. It might not be the safest ride, but it is easily the coolest and one of the most unique I've ever seen. **—CODY S.**

Who can resist the charm of riding Mario's trusty steed, Yoshi? Am I right? I *know* I'm right! **—BCWELL**

One mode of transportation rises above the rest: the mine cart. Think about it—how many great games have a mine-cart level? Just to name a few: Kirby Super Star, Super Mario RPG: Legend of the Seven Stars, Super Paper Mario, and (my personal favorite) Donkey Kong Country. Let's face it; games wouldn't be nearly as fun or exciting without the classic mine cart. **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

PLEASE WRITE US

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Understand that the magazine staff is separate from Nintendo; we don't make the games.

Don't send links to game coverage on the Web—trust us; we see it all.

Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

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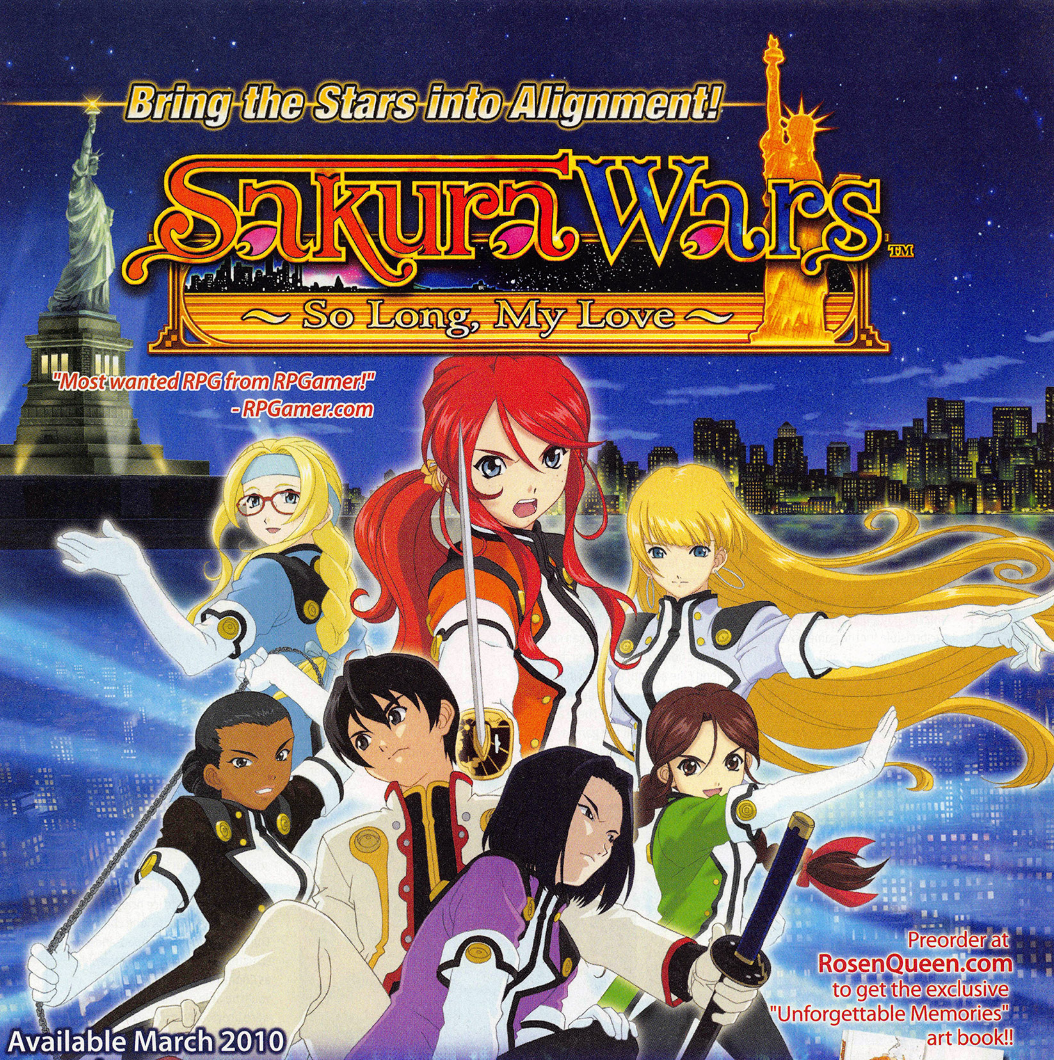
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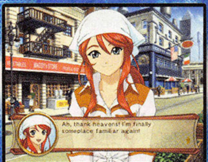
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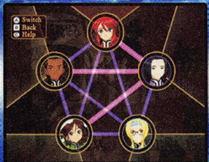
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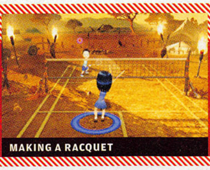
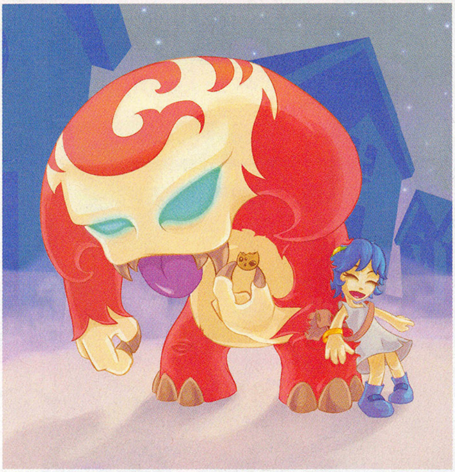


Beast Friend

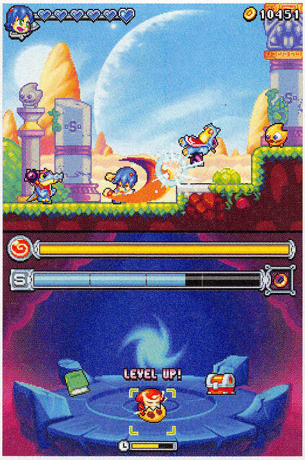
What do you get when you combine Metroid, Tamagotchi, and Henry Hatsworth? **Project Monster**, one of the year's most intriguing DS games.



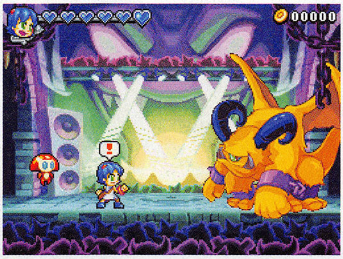
Last year's Henry Hatsworth in the Puzzling Adventure came out of nowhere and charmed our pants off with its charismatic hero and inventive platforming-meets-puzzler gameplay. Many of the folks responsible for the game have since left Electronic Arts and formed an independent development studio named DreamRift. The team's first project with the new company is Project Monster, a title for the Nintendo DS handheld that looks to continue what Hatsworth started.

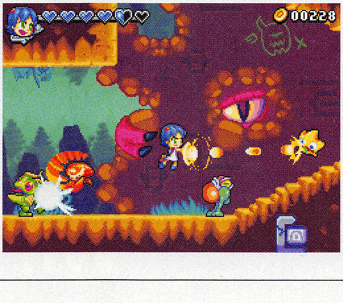
Most notable is the harmonious use of the dual screens. The top display features action-platforming gameplay with heroine Ellie, while the bottom display serves as a sanctuary for her pet monster, Chomp. At any time, you can summon Chomp to the upper screen to lend Ellie a hand, though what type of assistance he offers depends on how you raise him. There are shops throughout the game where you can buy toys, books, weapons, and other items for your furry friend, and during gameplay, he'll experiment and interact with his new goodies on the bottom screen. At certain junctures, Chomp will evolve based on which items you've given him, as well as how you've used him up to that point. There are more than 30 different forms the monster can take, each with its own unique actions, attributes, and abilities. He might learn a lightning-based attack, for instance, or gain the power to create ice bridges, enabling Ellie to cross long chasms. The game's nonlinear, open-ended structure is reminiscent of Metroid; as Chomp acquires new abilities, you'll be able to reach areas that were previously inaccessible. Each region culminates in a screen-filling boss battle against another human-monster duo.

What we've seen of Project Monster thus far definitely has us excited; this is probably the first time anyone's done something interesting with the virtual pet concept since Seaman for Dreamcast. As we go to press, the game doesn't yet have a publisher, but DreamRift assures us that a deal is imminent. We'll keep you posted. —STEVE T.



When the blue meter is full, Chomp can unleash a screen-clearing super attack à la Hatsworth's mech.

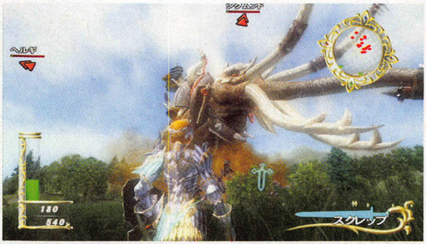




NEWS *from* JAPAN!

Myths and Mysteries

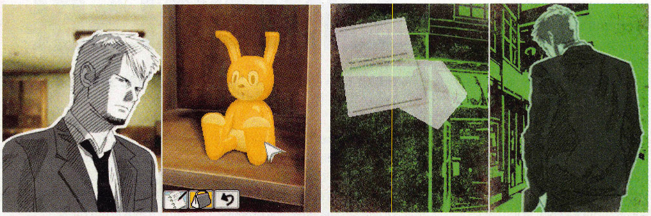
In Japan, Nintendo's late-winter lineup includes a Norse-themed slash-'em-up for Wii and a sequel to Hotel Dusk for DS.



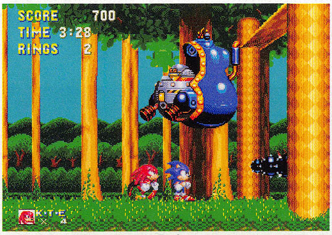
ZANGEKI NO REGINLEIV

In late 2008, Nintendo showed off a few tantalizing seconds of a game titled Dynamic Zan. More than a year later, that game has returned with a solid February release date and an even stranger title: Zangeki no ReginLeiv. In Story mode, the game puts players in the role of either Frey or Freya, the brother-and-sister deities of Norse mythology. Each has exclusive stages and moves, with Frey gravitating toward melee weapons like hammers and lances while Freya fights from afar with bows and magic wands. You can aim anywhere on the screen with the Wii Remote controller (the game is compatible with the Wii MotionPlus accessory, but does not require it), and targeting specific body parts of your foes seems to be a major combat tactic. In addition to the single-player Story mode, Zangeki no ReginLeiv offers online co-op battles for up to four players over Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection.

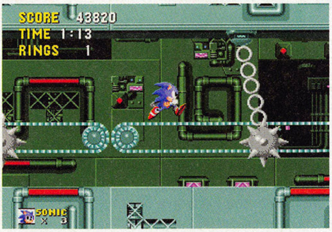
When they tire of slaying mythical beasts, Japanese Nintendo fans can curl up with a good book. Or rather, they can hold their Nintendo DS handhelds sideways like a book, and pop in a copy of Last Window: Midnight Promise. Last Window resumes the adventures of Kyle Hyde, the cop-turned-salesman who cracked the mystery of Hotel Dusk: Room 215. His newest adventure begins in 1980—a year after the events of that game—but also flashes back to the 1960s, when Kyle's father died under mysterious circumstances. The game looks and plays similarly to its predecessor, but a new twist comes in the form of the titular *Last Window*, an in-game novel that is unlocked chapter by chapter as Kyle digs into the mysteries of his own past. **—CASEY L.**



LAST WINDOW: MIDNIGHT PROMISE



Sonic Classic Collection includes hedgehog, echidna, and mutant squirrel. Morbidly obese cat sold separately.

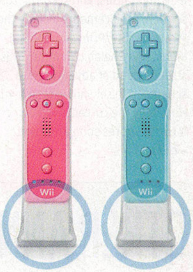


Fast from the Past

Sega brings vintage hedgehog action to the DS with Sonic Classic Collection.

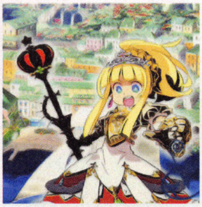
Sonic the Hedgehog has done a lot of crazy stuff recently. He's wielded a sword, he's turned into a werebeast, and he's competed against a certain plumber in both the summer and winter Olympics. But this spring he'll be returning to his roots on the Nintendo DS with Sonic Classic Collection. Featuring the Blue Blur's original adventures from the Sega Genesis, Sonic Classic Collection contains some of the best (and speediest) platformers of the 16-bit era: the groundbreaking Sonic the Hedgehog, Sonic the Hedgehog 2 (which introduced Tails, Sonic's little buddy), Sonic the Hedgehog 3 (featuring the debut of Sonic's rival, Knuckles the Echidna), and Sonic & Knuckles (in which both Sonic and Knuckles are playable characters). Gamers will also be able to play as Knuckles in Sonic 2 and Sonic 3 using Sonic & Knuckles's vaunted "lock-on technology." To top it off, the compilation will contain unlockable artwork and an in-depth video history of Sonic, making it a must-have for any die-hard hedgehog aficionado. **—CHRIS H.**

NEW COLORS ALERT



February 14

(includes Wii MotionPlus accessory)



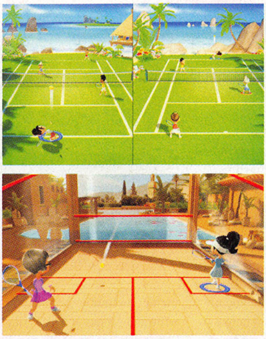
Aquarian Odyssey

NEWS *from* JAPAN!

The third installment of the Etrian Odyssey series takes to the seas. Will it hold water?

After churning out two games in a little over a year, the Etrian Odyssey team went back to the drawing board for the third installment in the franchise, spending an extra year to make some drastic changes in the cult-favorite series of dungeon crawlers. For one thing, it may no longer be a dungeon crawler at all—adventurers will now pilot a ship, using their touch-screen maps to chart the islands and currents of a vast, monster-filled sea. Players needn't sail alone; they can form a wireless fleet with other players, each piloting their own vessel as they chart unexplored regions together.

Etrian Odyssey II tweaked the original game's classes and added a few more, but don't expect Etrian Odyssey III to do the same. It's scrapping every last one of the existing classes, and starting from scratch; replacements include the Pirate, Prince/Princess, Shinobi, Monk, and Phalanx. In Japan, this strange band of adventurers is scheduled to set sail on March 4th. Hopefully the currents will carry it to our shores soon after that. **—CASEY L.**



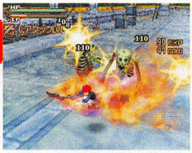
What's All the Racquet?

A volley of racquet games is headed for Wii.

Racqueteers rejoice! Racquet Sports, courtesy of Ubisoft, serves tennis-elbow nirvana to Wii this March. Featuring five games—tennis, ping-pong, badminton, squash, and beach tennis—and enhanced control by way of the WiiMotion Plus accessory and Ubisoft's motion-tracking camera, Racquet Sports *might* legitimately straddle the line between party game and sport sim. On the party-game side, a bundle of creative environments (an underwater reef and a New York loft, for instance), character customization, and beefy multiplayer (co-op and competitive) should keep things casual and social. On the sim side, Ubisoft promises championship play and a control scheme designed for "unprecedented realism." Here's hoping they pull it off. **—PATRICK C.**

Sinistral Six

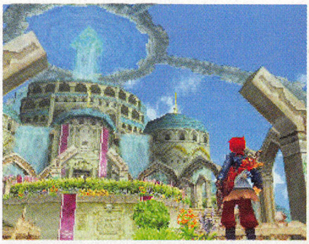
NEWS *from* JAPAN!

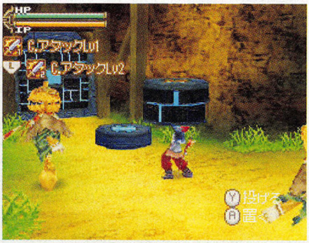


Super NES cult-classic **Lufia 2: Rise of the Sinistrals** is being reborn on the Nintendo DS.

Though obscure here, Japanese gamers of the 16-bit era used to mention the Lufia series in the same breath as Final Fantasy and Dragon Quest. Alas, the promising franchise sputtered out in subsequent generations, spawning only a single cell-phone game in the last several years. But now that Square Enix owns Taito, the series's former publisher, they've hired its original developers at Neverland Co. to reboot the franchise, beginning with a remake of Lufia 2 for the Nintendo DS. (Chronologically, Lufia 2 is the first game in the series.)

Whereas the original Lufia 2 was turn-based, the DS remake is an action-RPG. Players can switch on the fly between their six party members, each of whom has unique abilities that are useful for both battling monsters and solving the game's numerous puzzles. The overhead-view hand-drawn graphics have also been swapped out for real-time 3-D characters and environments, as well as lovely prerendered event scenes. The game is scheduled for a February release in Japan, but there's no word yet on its Western prospects. **—CASEY L.**





OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS

Harmonix, MTV Games, and Warner Bros. Interactive will follow up 2009's The Beatles: Rock Band with Green Day: Rock Band for Wii.... The prince we know and love from the Prince of Persia series returns on Wii and DS with Ubisoft's Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands.... Activision has more Autobots-versus-Decepticons action on the way with Transformers: War for Cybertron for Wii and DS.... Just because Midway's gone doesn't mean we won't be getting more TNA pro wrestling—SouthPeak is publishing TNA Impact!: Cross the Line for DS.... We'll have the exclusive on one of these titles next issue. Can you guess which one? **—JUSTIN C.**

GAME WATCH

forecast

Wii		
Alice in Wonderland	Disney	3/10
Arc Rise Fantasia	Ignition	SUM 10
Arcade Shooter: Ilvelo	UFO	Q1 10
Bermuda Triangle: Saving the Coral	Storm City	2/10
Build-A-Bear Workshop: Friendship Valley	The Game Factory	3/10
Calling	Hudson	SPR 10
City Builder	Collision	2/10
Combat Wings: The Great Battles of WWII	City Interactive	2/10
The Daring Game for Girls	Majesco	2/10
Data East Arcade Classics	Majesco	2/10
Def Jam Rapstar	4mm	2010
Endless Ocean: Blue World	Nintendo	2/10
Epic Mickey	Disney	FALL 10
Family Party: 30 Great Games Winter Fun	D3Publisher	2/10
Flip's Twisted World	Majesco	SPR 10
Fragile Dreams: Farewell Ruins of the Moon	XSEED	3/10
Gladiator A.D.	TBA	TBA
Grease	505	TBA
Green Day: Rock Band	MTV	TBA
The Grinder	TBA	TBA
GTI Club Supermini Festa!	Konami	SPR 10
How to Train Your Dragon	Activision	3/10
Jaja's Adventure	UFO	Q1 10
The Legend of Zelda*	Nintendo	TBA
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4	Warner Bros.	2010
Let's Play Ballerina	Deep Silver	3/10
Let's Play Garden	Deep Silver	3/10
Line Attack Heroes	Nintendo	TBA
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest	Warner Bros.	SPR 10
Lost in Shadow	Hudson	SUM 10
Major League Baseball 2K10	2K Sports	3/10
Metroid: Other M	Nintendo	2010
Monado: Beginning of the World	Nintendo	TBA
Monster Hunter Tri	Capcom	3/10
Mr. T	TBA	TBA
NBA Jam	EA Sports	FALL 10
Pizza Delivery Boy	Majesco	3/10
Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	Ubisoft	5/10
Pyroblazer	TBA	TBA
Racquet Sports	Ubisoft	3/10
Red Steel 2	Ubisoft	2/10
Rock Blast	UFO	Q1 10
Rooms: The Main Building	Hudson	SPR 10
Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love	NIS America	Q1 10
Sam & Max Season Two	Atari	TBA
Sengoku Basara Samurai Heroes	Capcom	2010
Shiren the Wanderer	Atlus	2/10
Sin and Punishment 2	Nintendo	Q1 10
Sky Pirates of Neo Terra	Aspyr	TBA
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	Sega	3/10
Span Smasher	Nintendo	TBA
Stratusphere	TBA	TBA
Super Mario Galaxy 2	Nintendo	2010
Super Monkey Ball Step & Roll	Sega	2/10
Tetris	Majesco	SPR 10
Transformers: War for Cybertron	Activision	2010
Trauma Team	Atlus	2010
NINTENDO DS		
Ace Attorney Investigations: Miles Edgeworth	Capcom	2/10
Again	Tecmo	3/10
Alice in Wonderland	Disney	3/10
America's Test Kitchen: Let's Get Cooking	Nintendo	3/10
Animal Country: Life on the Farm	City Interactive	2/10
Art of Murder	City Interactive	3/10
ATV Quad Kings	Storm City	3/10
ATV Revolution	Majesco	3/10
Blue Dragon: Awakened Shadow	D3Publisher	SPR 10
Build-A-Bear Workshop: Welcome to Hugsville	The Game Factory	3/10
Cheer We Go!	Natsume	3/10
Crime Scene	SouthPeak	2/10
The Daring Game for Girls	Majesco	2/10
Deca Sports DS	Hudson	SPR 10
Dementium II	SouthPeak	3/10
Disciples II	Strategy First	TBA
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Reverie	Square Enix	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Chain Reaction	Deep Silver	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Critical Mass	Deep Silver	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Proving Grounds	Deep Silver	TBA
Easy Piano	Valcon	2010
Foto Showdown	Konami	Q1 10
Ghost Trick*	Capcom	FALL 10
Ghostwire: Link to the Paranormal	Majesco	2010
Golden Sun DS	Nintendo	2010
Grease	505	TBA
House M.D.	Legacy	TBA
How to Train Your Dragon	Activision	3/10
Imagine Gymnast	Ubisoft	3/10
Infinite Space	Sega	3/10
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4	Warner Bros.	2010
Let's Play Ballerina	Deep Silver	3/10
Let's Play Flight Attendant	Deep Silver	3/10
Let's Play Garden	Deep Silver	3/10
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest	Warner Bros.	SPR 10
Major League Baseball 2K10	2K Sports	3/10
Monster Rancher DS	Tecmo	3/10
Montessori Music	SouthPeak	3/10
Picross 3D	Nintendo	TBA
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Pokémon HeartGold Version	Nintendo	3/10
Pokémon SoulSilver Version	Nintendo	3/10
Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	Ubisoft	5/10
Project Monster	TBA	FALL 10
Puzzle Overload	Telegames	SPR 10
Puzzle Quest II	D3Publisher	SPR 10
Ragnarok DS	XSEED	2/10
Rooms: The Main Building	Hudson	SPR 10
Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey	Atlus	3/10
Solitaire Overload Plus	Telegames	SPR 10
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	Sega	3/10
Sonic Classic Collection	Sega	3/10
Sonny with a Chance	Disney	SPR 10
Super Speed Machines	Majesco	2/10
T.A.C. Heroes: The Big Red One	Storm City	3/10
Tetris	Majesco	SPR 10
TNA IMPACT!: Cross the Line	SouthPeak	WIN 10
Transformers: War for Cybertron	Activision	2010
WarioWare D.I.Y.	Nintendo	3/10
Zhu Zhu Pets	Activision	SPR 10

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WiiWARE REVIEWS
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CAVE STORY
DIATOMIC
FLOWERWORKS
HARVEST MOON: MY LITTLE SHOP
MAGNETIS
MOKI MOKI
RUBIK'S PUZZLE GALAXY: RUSH
STOP STRESS: A DAY OF FURY
TALES OF MONKEY ISLAND CHAPTER 4: THE TRIAL AND EXECUTION OF GUYBRUSH THREEPWOOD
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A BOY AND HIS BLOB
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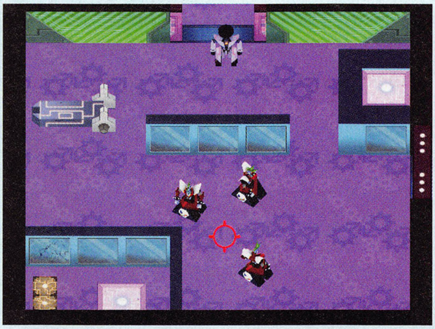
SUPER MARIO KART

DSiWARE REVIEWS
ARMY DEFENDER
BALL FIGHTER
BEJEWELED TWIST
BOOKWORM
ELECTROPLANKTON LUMILOOP, LUMINARROW, MARINE-CRYSTALS, SUN-ANIMALCULE, AND VARVOICE
FOTO FACE: THE FACE STEALER STRIKES
LITTLEST PET SHOP
POP ISLAND
RAYMAN
SUDOKU CHALLENGE!
YUMMY YUMMY COOKING JAM
...and more!



Play that Funky WiiWare, Frobot!

There's panic at the disco in **Frobot**, an offbeat puzzle-adventure-shooter hybrid for WiiWare.

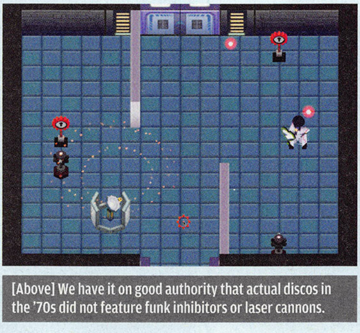
Question: When is a puzzle-adventure-shooter not just a puzzle-adventure-shooter? Answer: When your hero is an afro-wearing robot who'd much rather be chillin' in the disco with his lady-bots than fighting an evil corporation bent on planetary destruction. And that, of course, is exactly what you get in Frobot, a decidedly funky-fresh WiiWare title from developer Fugazo.

Set in a future dimension where humanity is long gone and robots populate the Earth, Frobot puts you in control of the titular groovemeister as you wage war against the evil Microshaft Corporation. The company has committed the heinous crime of kidnapping Frobot's five (yes, five) girlfriends: Sassy Brass, Jada Jett, Foxy Proxy, Violet Reel, and Astella Bust.

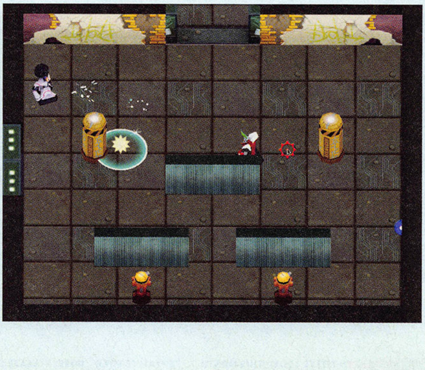
"I would describe Frobot as a ladies' man," says lead artist Peter Lim. "I mean, look at him—he has five girlfriends! His lifestyle choices might allude to commitment issues, though.... But Frobot is simple—he just wants to have fun. All he really wants to do is dance! The salvation of the world always comes second."

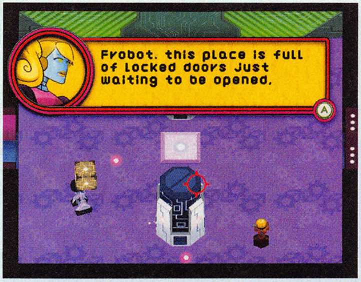
Interestingly, Frobot wasn't initially conceived with a disco theme. The game was originally a more traditional sci-fi title called Robot Wars until one of the developers joked that they should slap an F on the name and call it Frobot. "Everyone burst into laughter at such a ridiculous concept," reveals producer Andrew Lum. "Naturally, we ran with the idea and redesigned the entire game."

Regardless of Frobot's origins, he's got

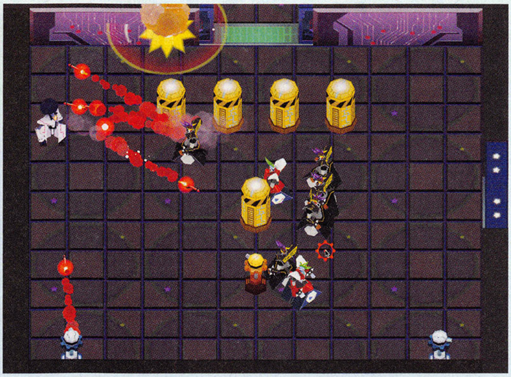


[Above] We have it on good authority that actual discos in the '70s did not feature funk inhibitors or laser cannons.

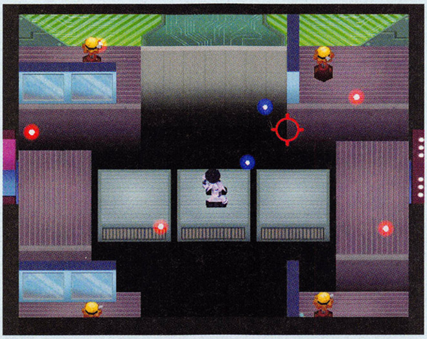




Frobot, this place is full of locked doors just waiting to be opened.



[Right] Frobot might have trouble stayin' alive once he enters Microshaft HQ.



a tough path to travel before he can get his groove on. He'll have to overcome room after room of Microshaft traps, puzzles, and enemies to get his girls back. Armed with an energy blaster and more, your goal in each stage is to re-energize the teleportation devices that let you proceed from one level to the next and thus allow you to thwart the bad guys and rescue your robotic honeys.

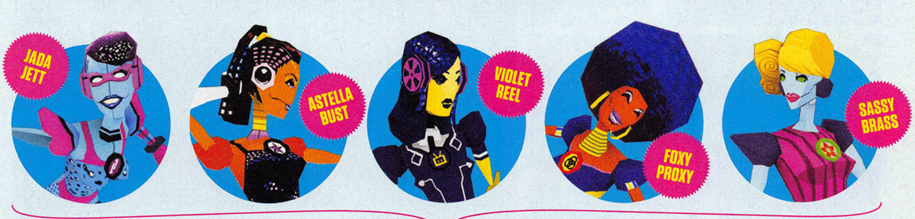
According to the developers, Frobot is heavily inspired by two Nintendo titles: the original NES Legend of Zelda and Wii Play's Tanks. "In terms of controls, Frobot behaves very similar to Tanks," Lum explains. "However, the actual rooms are similar to The Legend of Zelda, where you find keys to open doors, battle multiple enemy types, and solve puzzles."

Frobot's energy blaster is his most useful weapon. While you move Frobot with the Control Stick on the Nunchuk controller, you'll be able to independently aim in any direction by pointing with the Wii Remote controller and shoot by pressing B. The blaster isn't just good for blowing up enemy drones; it can also activate panels to unlock doors, and flip switches to turn on machinery (such as moving platforms or cranes). But you'll have to be careful—your bullets ricochet off walls, and if they hit you, it's just as deadly as an enemy's shot. And that's just the start of what you'll have to contend with; you must also move blocks to activate pressure pads, find creative ways around invincible enemies, deal with funk inhibitors that prevent you from shooting, use teleportation gates to get your shots into hard-to-reach areas, and more. Despite Frobot's goofy premise, the game provides a healthy challenge that requires both smarts and quick reflexes.

"Typically we make PC casual games, and we're limited on how difficult we can make the game," comments Lum. "I'm a big fan of old-school NES and SNES games that weren't afraid to [be] challenging.... We've noticed that the WiiWare market loves challenging games like Contra ReBirth, so we were happy to step it up a notch."

Luckily, you'll have an evolving arsenal of special weapons and abilities to help you out. Each of Frobot's girlfriends holds a portion of his power, and as you free them, you'll gain access to the Robo Hustle (a dash move), Dynomines (powerful explosive charges that can destroy weakened walls), Stud Missiles (ranged explosives), the Heart Stopper (a shield for deflecting enemy shots), and the Jive Stalker (a guided energy ball). "It's a whirling disco ball of sparkly death," describes game designer Eric Esteb, referring to the Jive Stalker. "It follows your cursor around the screen like a little lost puppy, so it's really useful for laying a smack down in those hard-to-reach areas. The trick is guiding it where you want without running it into a wall."

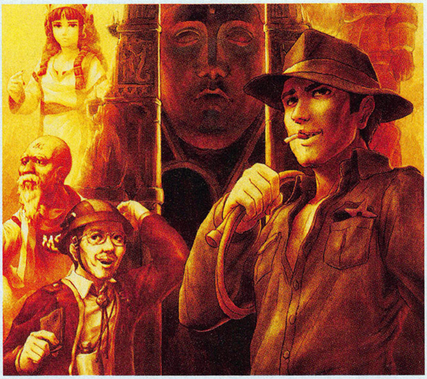
In addition to 25 stages of single-player action, Frobot features a battle mode for up to four players, which will let you and your friends duke it out in 10 obstacle-laden arenas. Get ready for the funk to fly in the first half of 2010. —CHRIS H.



FROBOT'S FEMBOTS

What's Old Is New Again

Explore ancient ruins! Fight enormous enemies! Try to stay alive! If adventure has a name, it must be **La-Mulana**.

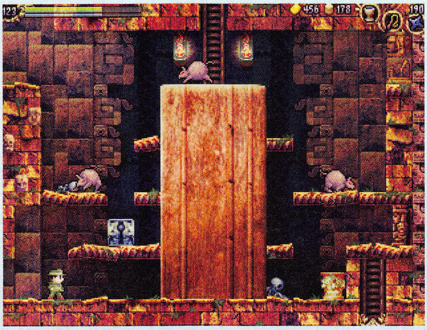


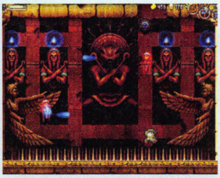
With its whip-cracking, fedora-wearing protagonist, La-Mulana could be easily mistaken for the latest Indiana Jones adventure. And sure, this WiiWare title definitely draws inspiration from Steven Spielberg and George Lucas's famous archaeologist (something developer Nigoro freely admits). But Dr. Jones had it easy compared to La-Mulana's main character Lemeza Kosugi—he never had to deal with the kinds of challenges that Lemeza faces constantly.

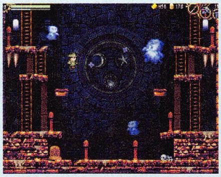
The developers wouldn't have it any other way. Growing up playing highly challenging games on the MSX (a Japanese computer) and feeling that modern titles have too much hand-holding, the developers made the original PC version of La-Mulana to recapture that punishing old-school feel. Fortunately for the easily frustrated, the Nicalis-published WiiWare version's difficulty level has been toned down a bit. It's still not a cakewalk, but even the developers admit the PC title's difficulty was "too insane."

Without question, La-Mulana is hard. You're not given any real direction, but exploring the 18 different areas in this Metroid-style game is part of the fun—and part of the challenge, as enemies respawn when you reenter an area. The responsive controls help make the experience enjoyable; Nigoro wanted to ensure players were given the necessary tools to be successful. The most practical of those tools are your wide array of armaments; in addition to the whip, you can acquire six main weapons (including a sword, an axe, and a katana), as well as 11 subweapons (such as shurikens, grenades, javelins, and a gun). The subweapons in particular are handy when facing the nine Guardian bosses; shurikens are invaluable against a giant two-headed snake Guardian, for instance.

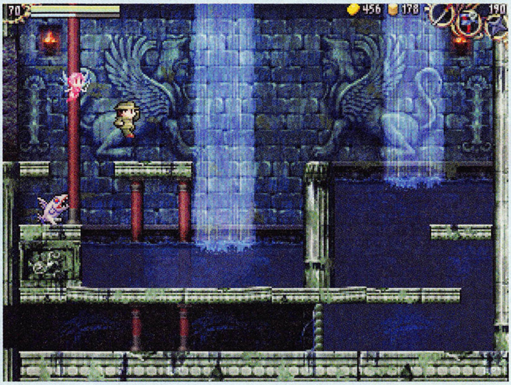
Perhaps the most notable change made for the WiiWare edition of La-Mulana is visual. Still distinctly yesteryear, the graphics have been upgraded from 8-bit to 32-bit quality. The developers wanted to have the "ultimate 2-D graphics." However, as much as we like the title's new look, we can't say they've achieved that particular goal. La-Mulana still looks very retro—just as an old-school-style game should. **—JUSTIN C.**

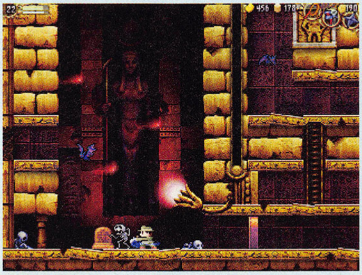




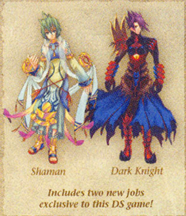


Simon Belmont would likely feel right at home in the world of La-Mulana.





3 MILLION ONLINE GAMERS CAN'T BE WRONG.


Shaman
Dark Knight

Includes two new jobs exclusive to this DS game!

RAGNARÖK

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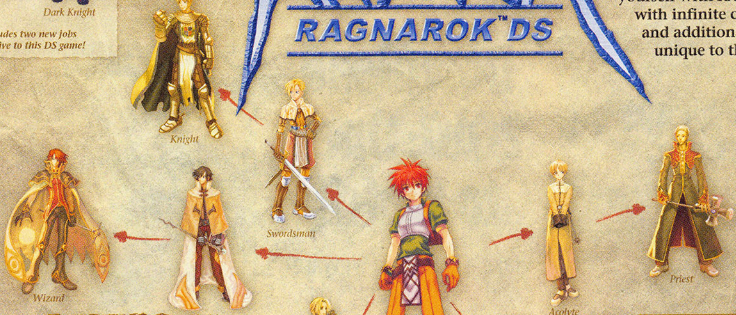
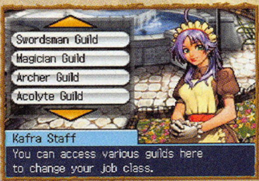
The *RAGNAROK ONLINE* game has already captivated millions of players worldwide with its limitless customization and incredible gameplay.

Now you can discover this phenomenon yourself with *RAGNAROK DS,* filled with infinite choices to explore and additional character jobs unique to this DS version!

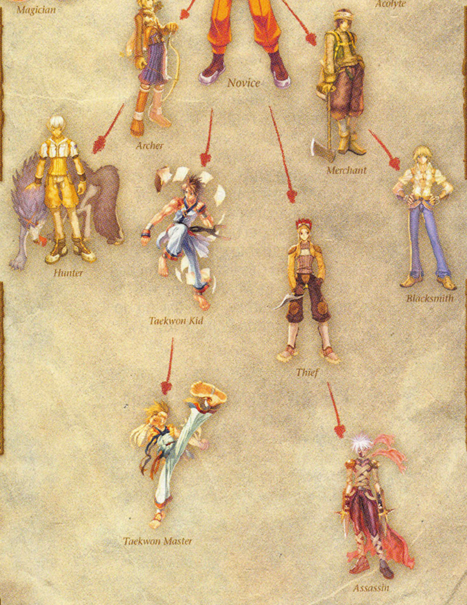

Knight
Swordsman
Wizard
Magician
Priest
Acolyte


Swordsman Guild
Magician Guild
Archer Guild
Acolyte Guild

Kafra Staff

You can access various guilds here to change your job class.

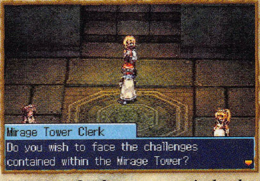
All of the addictive gameplay of the online original game, now in convenient travel size! You never have to leave Midgard again!


Novice
Archer
Merchant
Hunter
Blacksmith
Taekwon Kid
Thief
Taekwon Master
Assassin

Level up and select from 17 different jobs: swordsman, shaman, assassin and many more, each with unique skills.

Double Strafing
Menu

Use the Touch Screen for all commands! Slash with the stylus to attack with your sword or tap to unleash powerful magic!



Mirage Tower Clerk

Do you wish to face the challenges contained within the Mirage Tower?

Join 1 or 2 adventurers wirelessly and challenge the 50-level Mirage Tower for lasting challenges and rare items!

EVERYONE 10+

Alcohol Reference
Mild Fantasy Violence
Mild Language
Suggestive Themes

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NINTENDO DS™

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Download 2010: Ones to Watch

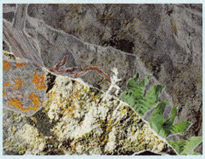
Take a look at 10 WiiWare and DSiWare games that are likely to be on your must-download list in 2010.

Starting on page 26 you can feast your eyes on many of the Wii and Nintendo DS retail releases that will blow your mind in 2010, but WiiWare and DSiWare have plenty of exciting stuff on the way, too. From platforming to strategy, from long-running franchises to all-new properties, there's a lot of downloadable goodness to go around—and this list only scratches the surface of what's to come. The moral of the story: start saving up those Nintendo Points! —CHRIS H.

And Yet It Moves

WiiWARE · BROKEN RULES

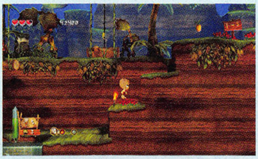
And Yet It Moves turns platforming on its head—and on its side. As you navigate unique paper-collage-style levels, you'll be able to rotate the game world to help you make jumps and overcome obstacles.



Bonk: Brink of Extinction

WiiWARE · HUDSON

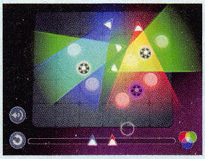
Hudson's big-headed caveman, Bonk, is back! In addition to the usual jumping and headbutting, you'll be able to use all-new elemental powers to help you save prehistory from an impending meteor collision.



Liight

WiiWARE · STUDIO WALLJUMP

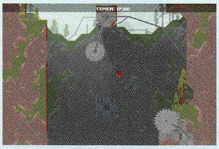
You'll manipulate colored lights to hit like-hued targets in this promising brain-bender. The game will feature more than 100 stages and a nonstop survival mode, plus you'll be able to make your own puzzles.



Super Meat Boy

WiiWARE · TEAM MEAT

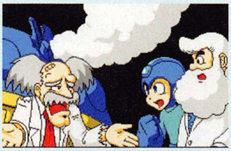
Quirky, cool, and kinda gross, Super Meat Boy is guaranteed to push your jumping and wall-climbing skills to the limits. The developers are looking to include more than 300 levels, including a retro-themed bonus chapter.



Mega Man 10

WiiWARE · CAPCOM

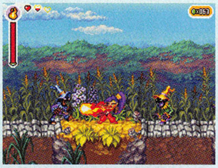
When it comes to 2-D action, Mega Man always delivers. New bosses like Solar Man, Blade Man, and Chill Man will keep you on your toes, but a new Easy mode promises to make the game more accessible than the last installment.



Shantae: Risky's Revenge

DSiWARE · WAYFORWARD

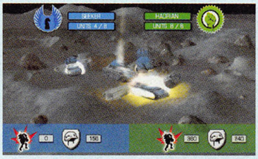
We're not sure which is more exciting: the fact that Shantae is returning after so many years, the fact that this game looks absolutely amazing, or the fact that this is only the first game in a three-part saga.



Military Madness: Nectaris

WiiWARE · HUDSON

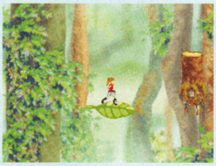
The original Military Madness on the TurboGrafx16 set the standard for console strategy games. Experience it for yourself in this enhanced remake, which includes new hero units in multiplayer mode.



Reflection

DSiWARE · KONAMI

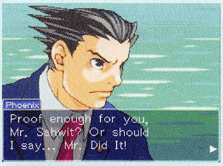
In Reflection, your character has been magically split in two, and you must control both parts—one on the top screen, the other on the bottom screen. It's a different and clever type of platformer.



Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney

WiiWARE · CAPCOM

The Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney games were excellent on DS. Now you'll be able to experience the quirky legal dramas all over again on WiiWare. The first game could be out by the time you read this.



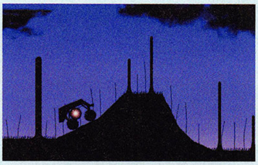
Phoenix

Proof enough for you, Mr. Sahwit? Or should I say... Mr. Did It!

NightSky

WiiWARE · NICALIS

The silhouette aesthetic of NightSky certainly helps the game stand out from the crowd. Its premise—rolling a ball through obstacle-laden environments using limited special powers—is also very compelling.



FROM A LEADER IN GAME DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

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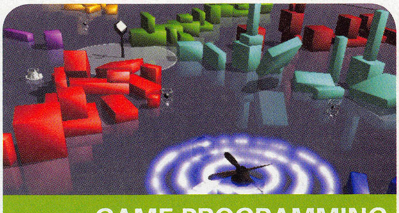
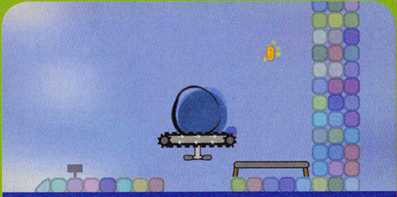
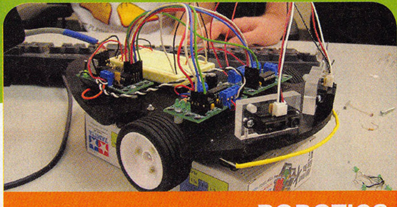


GAME PROGRAMMING

3D ANIMATION



GAME DESIGN



ROBOTICS

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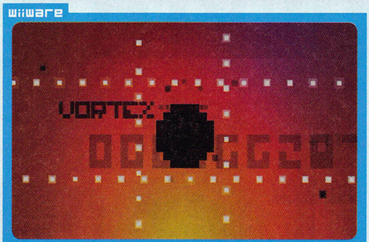
EVALUATION STATION

WiiWare



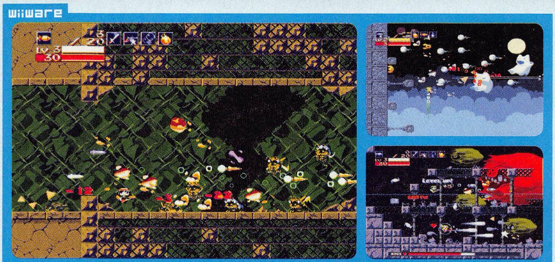
BIT.TRIP VOID

PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES** · GENRE: **ACTION** · Wii POINTS: **600**

Like its predecessors, the latest Bit.Trip from Aksys takes a simple concept and wraps it up in a slick package. Letting go of the motion control used for Beat and complex button-pad coordination of Core, Void adopts traditional Control Stick manipulation to have you steer a circle through a field of black and white bits. The object is to collect black ones to make your circle grow while avoiding white ones, which cost points and shrink the circle. As the circle grows, it's both easier to collect bits and more difficult to avoid them. The genius of the Bit.Trip games is that the bit patterns seem manageable, but can easily get out of hand if your concentration slips. Void delivers a tight and tense playing experience with a more successful control scheme than previous trips. **—GEORGE S.**

Recommended

WiiWare



CAVE STORY

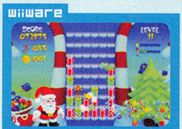
PUBLISHER: **NICALIS** · GENRE: **ADVENTURE** · Wii POINTS: **TBD**

Chris H's Pick

Cave Story is the perfect melding of nostalgic game design and modern sensibilities. Even though it has a vintage appearance and is obviously influenced by games from the NES era, it actually surpasses many of the classics, and brings those fuzzy, warm 8- and 16-bit memories to life without the rough edges. It hits all the right retro notes with creative enemies, thrilling boss battles, brilliant level design, and an almost perfect mix of exploration and action. A variety of sweet weapons and items gives Cave Story a Metroid vibe, but the unique world and structure allow the game to stand on its own. And the narrative—which is slowly doled out over the course of the adventure—is a thing of beauty, constantly keeping you intrigued. The challenge is spot-on, too: old-school tough at the default setting, but adjustable to appeal to a wider audience. Cave Story would easily be worth the investment even if it were a full-priced retail release.

Recommended

WiiWare



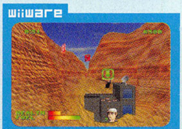
CHRISTMAS CLIX

PUBLISHER: **JV GAMES**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **1,000**

Christmas Clix, the latest salvo in the war on Christmas, invites players to indulge Santa's (heretofore unknown) penchant for manic puzzle-making. As gifts pile on a familiar Tetris-like grid, players click matching trinkets to clear space and trigger special items. Unfortunately, the yuletide theme can't sustain an oversimple, repetitive premise, and the game's attempt to distract players with periodic minigames fails to save Christmas. **—PATRICK C.**

Grumble Grumble

WiiWare



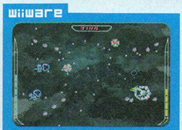
COPTER CRISIS

PUBLISHER: **DIGITAL LEISURE**
GENRE: **ACTION**
Wii POINTS: **500**

In theory, Copter Crisis consists of flying a rescue chopper through narrow confines while completing standard helicopter-game objectives (e.g., pick-ups and drop-offs). In practice, players will exhaust themselves fighting laborious controls; playing with the Wii Remote is a meditation on patience, while using the Wii Balance Board accessory triggers guffaws at Digital Leisure's audacity. Speaking of which, additional aircraft will cost you Wii Points?! **—PATRICK C.**

Grumble Grumble

WiiWare



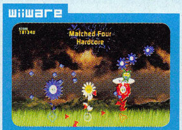
DIATOMIC

PUBLISHER: **GRENDEL GAMES**
GENRE: **ACTION**
Wii POINTS: **800**

Diatomic shows great potential—it's a shooter of surprising depth steeped in retro charm. Unfortunately, that promise is largely sacrificed to a control scheme that would have your orthopedist reaching for his gun; your ship's survival depends on constant whipping of the Wii Remote controller, a gesture that's alternately painful, tiresome, and imprecise. Even if you survive the repetitive stress, the remorseless difficulty will leave you asking, "why?" **—PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

WiiWare



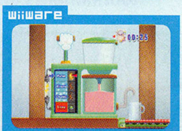
FLOWERWORKS

PUBLISHER: **NOCTURNAL ENTERTAINMENT**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **1,000**

Before diving into Flowerworks, you'll definitely want to check out the tutorial mode. Although the game's basics are simple enough to grasp (feed seeds to like-colored flowers), the finer points of the combo system aren't quite as obvious. Once you've gotten the hang of it, though, you'll find that this is a rather enjoyable puzzle game that requires quick reflexes. A lengthy adventure mode makes up for the lack of multiplayer support. **—PHIL T.**

Recommended

WiiWare



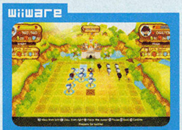
HARVEST MOON: MY LITTLE SHOP

PUBLISHER: **NATSUME**
GENRE: **SIMULATION**
Wii POINTS: **1,200**

As the title suggests, this entry in the long-running Harvest Moon series moves away from farming and into retail management. It's easy to be charmed by the Paper Mario-esque graphics, and the minigame-based gameplay is fun for a bit, but the action grows tiresome. Having to repeat the same set of elaborate minigames to, say, sell an ice cream cone simply isn't fun after six or seven times. Maybe life on the farm wasn't that bad after all. **—PHIL T.**

Hmmm...

WiiWare



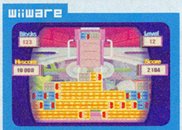
LITTLE TOURNAMENT OVER YONDER

PUBLISHER: **GEVO ENTERTAINMENT**
GENRE: **STRATEGY**
Wii POINTS: **800**

A lack of instructions makes the learning curve for Gevo's WiiWare debut too sharp, but persistence reveals it as a strong strategy-oriented battler. The turn-based portion is a bit like chess but with the object of moving the units in groups to let them pump up each other's stats. That makes it easier to survive the one-minute bursts of action. A dozen unit types offer a lot of options for short- and long-range battle. —**GEORGE S.**

Recommended

WiiWare



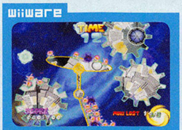
MAGNETIS

PUBLISHER: **YULLABY**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **500**

Magnetis's premise is simple: as blocks fall into play, players form lines enclosed by same-color Left and Right magnets. Conductor blocks keep things interesting by facilitating longer lines (and getting in your way). But a gentle learning curve belies daunting difficulty; the pace of the blocks ramps up quickly, and mistakes are unforgiving. It's intense, but definitely reserved for those seeking short bouts of acute cranial pressure. —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

WiiWare



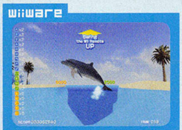
MOKI MOKI

PUBLISHER: **NATSUME**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **800**

Little pink Moki pop out of generators and float aimlessly unless you direct them to swirling stage exits in Natsume's clever moving-piece puzzle game. Though control is limited to activating environmental objects, most of the game's 100 stages offer unique twists. Early stages are no-brainers, but the introductions of predatory purple Groblins, multiple exits (each with a Moki quota), and complex structures add just enough of a challenge to keep things fun. —**GEORGE S.**

Recommended

WiiWare



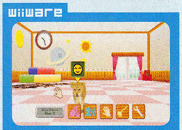
MY DOLPHIN

PUBLISHER: **T&S**
GENRE: **SIMULATION**
Wii POINTS: **500**

No one can accuse My Dolphin of ambition; players practice a limited number of tricks, then perform said tricks in timed shows/competitions. That's about it. (Well, you can also play with a ball or a ring, but they'll cost you additional Wii Points.) Of course, the game's shallowness could be forgiven if it made you feel remotely like a dolphin, but lame controls and grossly artificial animation drown that possibility in a burlap sack. —**PATRICK C.**

Grumble Grumble

WiiWare



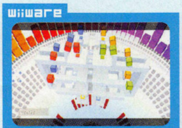
MY ZOO

PUBLISHER: **HUDSON**
GENRE: **SIMULATION**
Wii POINTS: **500**

Hudson's follow-up to My Aquarium doesn't take place in real time, but it may feel like it after you've spent hours watching elephants, bears, and zebras meander and sleep. Interaction with the eight animal types (and more available to purchase) comes in the form of feeding and petting. Three of four environments are generic zoo habitats; the fourth is, inexplicably, a child's room. Graphics, animation, and control are solid, but there's just not much to do in this zoo. —**GEORGE S.**

Hmmm...

WiiWare



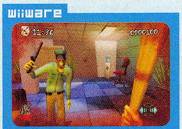
RUBIK'S PUZZLE GALAXY: RUSH

PUBLISHER: **TWO TRIBES**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **600**

Rubik's Puzzle Galaxy: RUSH, like all good puzzle games, starts with a basic objective: as colored blocks roll through geometric environs, players place signs in the blocks' paths to manipulate their movements and shepherd them to designated end points. Of course, as play progresses, things get tricky in all the right ways; hats off to Two Tribes for nailing the subtle interplay of difficulty, progression, frustration, and satisfaction. —**PATRICK C.**

Recommended

WiiWare



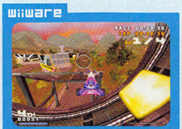
STOP STRESS: A DAY OF FURY

PUBLISHER: **ABYLIGHT**
GENRE: **ACTION**
Wii POINTS: **800**

I don't know about the "Stop Stress" part, but this game will indeed let you experience a day of fury. Although the premise is humorous, the title is basically a poor man's first-person action game in which you have limited control over your movement. Among the many problems: items you're supposed to collect magically pop up in areas you've already been through, and it's often hard to see your enemies. —**CHRIS H.**

Grumble Grumble

WiiWare



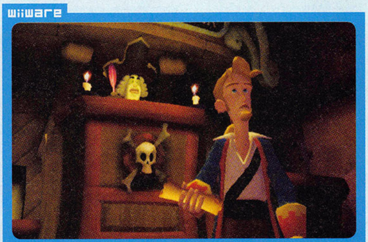
STUNT CARS

PUBLISHER: **ICON GAMES ENTERTAINMENT**
GENRE: **RACING**
Wii POINTS: **800**

You might think a game called Stunt Cars involves stunts. It's actually a half-baked racing game with a "physics" engine that precludes stunts (unless you count the release of the game itself). For a racing-game hall-of-shame candidate, though, it's got it all: terrible visuals, choppy animation, squirrelly handling, old-school car teleportation (if you go off the track), and a heroic refusal to offer the slightest hint of fun. —**PATRICK C.**

Grumble Grumble

WiiWare



TALES OF MONKEY ISLAND CHAPTER 4: THE TRIAL AND EXECUTION OF GUYBRUSH THREEPWOOD

PUBLISHER: **TELLTALE** · GENRE: **ADVENTURE** · Wii POINTS: **1,000**

Chris H's Pick

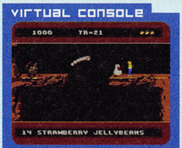
The fourth chapter of Tales of Monkey Island starts out a bit bumpy; the trial scenario you're thrust into is different from the adventure-game norm and requires some time to wrap your head around. Once you do, however, the game quickly picks up, offering great characterization, nifty puzzles, and a fantastic conclusion that superbly sets up the fifth episode. And unlike the first trip to Flotsam Island (in Chapter 1) this visit is technically solid.

Recommended

EVALUATION STATION

Wii WARE
VIRTUAL CONSOLE
DSiWARE

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



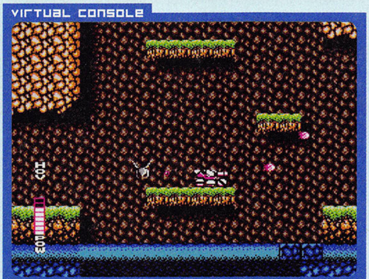
A BOY AND HIS BLOB: TROUBLE ON BLOBOLONIA

PLATFORM: **NES**
PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO/ABSOLUTE**
GENRE: **ADVENTURE**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1990**

Not surprisingly, this NES title has much in common with its recent Wii remake. In both games, you control a boy who uses his shape-shifting blob buddy to bypass obstacles. Although this 8-bit original still provides a good challenge with its heavy emphasis on puzzle solving, the somewhat awkward controls and mostly unclear goals leave the game feeling dated. It's fun but flawed. —**PHIL T.**

Hmmm...

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



BLASTER MASTER

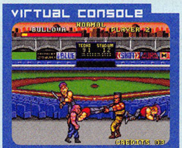
PLATFORM: **NES** · PUBLISHER: **SUNSOFT**
GENRE: **ACTION** · ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1988**

Phil T's Pick

Blaster Master was an outstanding game when it was first released, and it holds up remarkably well today. Taking cues from Metroid, it's set in a sprawling world with areas that can be accessed only after certain power-ups are collected. The two styles of gameplay (battling in your tank and exploring dungeons on foot) keep the action varied, and the extreme challenge guarantees that you'll get your money's worth. Even the graphics and music hold their own. It's still one of the NES's best.

Recommended

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



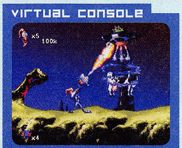
THE COMBATRIBES

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES**
PUBLISHER: **AKSYS/TECHNOS**
GENRE: **ACTION**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1993**

The Combatribes just doesn't have the goods to stack up against other co-op beat-'em-ups. The levels are ridiculously short (they generally consist of one wave of enemies and then a boss fight), your move set is too limited, and the enemy AI is supercheap. There are some cool maneuvers (like bashing a punk's face into the dirt) and the dialogue is hilariously goofy, but that's not enough to make this game worthwhile. —**CHRIS H.**

Grumble Grumble

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



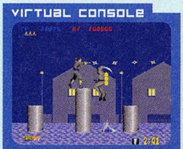
EARTHWORM JIM 2

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES**
PUBLISHER: **INTERPLAY/PLAYMATES**
GENRE: **ACTION**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1996**

Considering how popular the original Earthworm Jim was, this sequel had a lot to live up to. For the most part it succeeds. The fluid animation and silly themes capture the same goofy charm that the first game was famous for. However, there's an overreliance on gimmicky levels this time around. Although they add some variety, a few stages are more frustrating than fun. Overall, though, it's still a hoot. —**PHIL T.**

Recommended

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



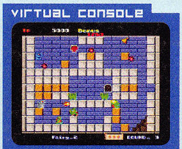
SHINOBI

PLATFORM: **ARCADE**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
GENRE: **ACTION**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1987**

The '80s belonged to ninjas and Sega arcade games, which made Shinobi the coolest thing this side of a Rubik's Cube. Killing ninjas and rescuing children is tough (one hit finishes you), but you can inch your way forward to prevent waiting enemies from ganging up on you. This is the kind of game in which you learn through trial and error, getting a bit further with each life and then kicking yourself when you die by doing something stupid. —**CHRIS SL.**

Recommended

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



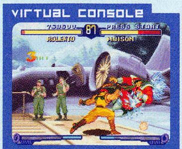
SOLOMON'S KEY

PLATFORM: **ARCADE**
PUBLISHER: **TECMO**
GENRE: **ACTION**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1986**

This arcade release is mostly redundant considering that the rather faithful NES port of the game has been available on the Virtual Console service for more than three years now. Regardless, this is still a very enjoyable game in which success depends on the proper creation and destruction of blocks as you maneuver through a series of puzzle-filled rooms. If you've not played it yet, this graphically superior version is definitely the one to try. —**PHIL T.**

Recommended

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



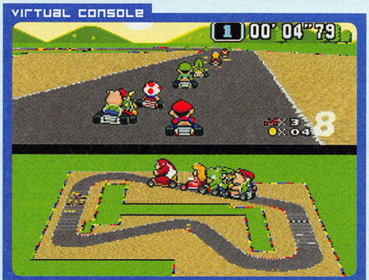
STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 2

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES**
PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM/NINTENDO**
GENRE: **FIGHTING**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1996**

The arcade version of Street Fighter Alpha 2 is one of the greatest fighting games ever made, and even though some sacrifices had to be made for the Super NES port (such as adding a brief load time prior to each fight), the brilliance of the original shines through. Responsive controls, traditional yet strategic 2-D fighting, and interesting, well-balanced characters (each with personalized bosses) are among the highlights. —**CHRIS H.**

Recommended

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



SUPER MARIO KART

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES** · PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **RACING** · ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1992**

Chris Sl's Pick

These early '90s karts can't match the superior looks and handling of today's models, but there's still a little life left in these engines. If you can stick with the game long enough to get the hang of the twitchy digital controls (watch the oversteering and tap the gas as you take sharp turns) there's more than enough racing action to get the competitive juices flowing. And for my money, the original two-player split-screen Battle Mode still hasn't been beaten.

Recommended

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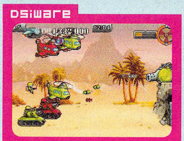
EVALUATION STATION

DSiWare



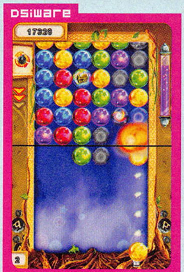
ARMY DEFENDER

PUBLISHER: **MINDSCAPE**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Army Defender features nice 2-D visuals and a never-ending supply of enemies to eliminate with your touch-screen-controlled cannon—but not much else. Enemies vulnerable to like-colored bullets add an element of strategy, but ultimately the game boils down to pointing and shooting at foot soldiers, tanks, and planes as they assault your base. I quickly tired of the repetitive action, but at only 200 Nintendo DSi Points it might be worth a try. —CHRIS H.

Hmmm...

DSiWare



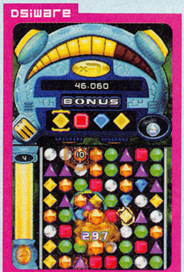
BALL FIGHTER

PUBLISHER: **TEYON**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Aside from a clever two-player mode in which both opponents play simultaneously on the same DSi, there is little reason to recommend this bland take on the classic puzzler Magical Drop. With little variety between modes and its repetitive nature, this can be skipped. —PHIL T.

Grumble Grumble

DSiWare



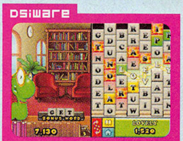
BEJEWELED TWIST

PUBLISHER: **POPCAP GAMES**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

This game puts a new spin on the Bejeweled formula by making you rotate groups of gems to make a match. Although there are only two modes of play (a basic single-player match and a vs. mode), the addictive gameplay and low price make this one worth getting. —PHIL T.

Recommended

DSiWare



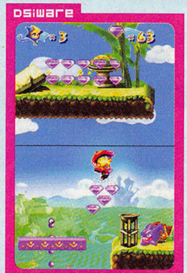
BOOKWORM

PUBLISHER: **POPCAP GAMES**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

At 500 Nintendo DSi Points, this downloadable version of the addictive word-search puzzle game is a bargain. Granted, it's not as full-featured as the DS-card version of Bookworm—the DSiWare game is missing its sibling's Action mode and one-on-one multiplayer—but the letter-linking gameplay remains intact and as fun as ever. Plus, you might just learn a few new words while playing this title, too. —JUSTIN C.

Recommended

DSiWare



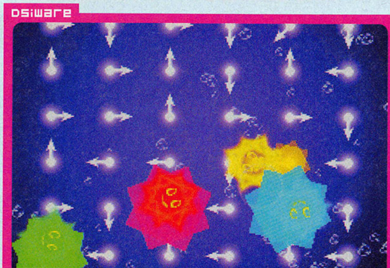
CASTLE OF MAGIC

PUBLISHER: **GAMELOFT**
GENRE: **PLATFORMER**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

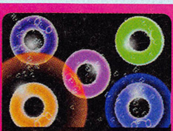
Though not as magical at its title implies, Castle of Magic is nonetheless a decent, good-looking platformer. Blast enemies, collect gems—you know the drill. Other than the ability to gain occasional power-ups by taking pictures, you've probably done it all before. —CHRIS H.

Hmmm...

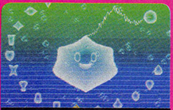
DSiWare



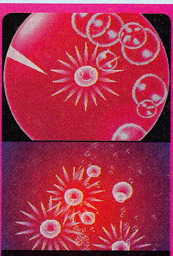
ELECTROPLANKTON LUMINARROW



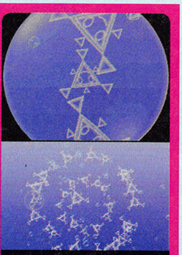
ELECTROPLANKTON LUMILOOP



ELECTROPLANKTON VARVOICE



ELECTROPLANKTON SUN-ANIMALCULE



ELECTROPLANKTON MARINE-CRYSTALS

ELECTROPLANKTON

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** · GENRE: **RHYTHM** · NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200 EACH**

With this second batch of five Electroplankton releases, the complete retail version of the musical toy is available to download via DSiWare. At only 200 Nintendo DSi Points per "species," the complete package is less expensive than it would be to purchase the limited-run DS cartridge second-hand. In Lumiloop, spinning each of the five ring-shaped plankton forms different pitches, creating some pleasing results when the sounds overlap. Unfortunately, after a minute or two, the simple harmonies grow tiresome. Luminarrow benefits from being a slightly more complex toy. Here you manipulate arrows to form a maze for the four plankton "notes" to follow. Experimenting with the critters' movement patterns to create a tune is engaging, making this arguably the best of the Electroplankton games. Tapping the snowflakelike Marine-Crystals is reminiscent of playing a piano or a xylophone. Because these little aquatic creatures like to move around, though, it's tough to plan out a "real" song. In Sun-Animalcule, tapping anywhere on the touch screen causes a plankton to appear, and it will continue to rhythmically produce a note as it slowly grows until the poor thing pops. Playing with the placement of these critters can be fun, but you'll often end up with a mishmash of sound. In Varvoice, you simply record a few seconds of sound that are played back with a variety of vocal effects (slowed down, higher-pitched, etc.). Considering that the DSi includes a sound-editing program that does this and more, there is little reason to purchase this game. As with the previous Electroplankton releases, it's too bad you can't save your creations. —PHIL T.

ELECTROPLANKTON LUMILOOP
Grumble Grumble

ELECTROPLANKTON LUMINARROW
Recommended

ELECTROPLANKTON MARINE-CRYSTALS
Hmmm...

ELECTROPLANKTON SUN-ANIMALCULE
Hmmm...

ELECTROPLANKTON VARVOICE
Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE

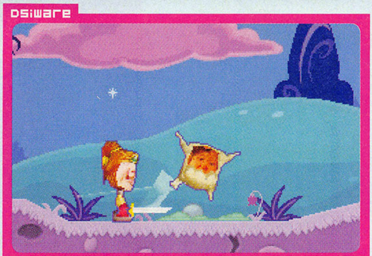


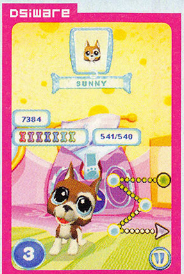
FOTO FACE: THE FACE STEALER STRIKES

PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS** GENRE: **PLATFORMER**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

Foto Face lets you use the Nintendo DSi's camera and microphone to insert your own face and voice into the adventure. Despite the novelty of seeing and hearing yourself, your friends, and your family in a game (and it *is* cool), the actual platforming mechanics are pretty bland. The level designs are extremely simple, and other than the need to occasionally change costumes to flip a switch or defeat an enemy, there is no strategy. The floaty controls also make precise jumping a chore. Novice players will enjoy the basic gameplay, but experienced gamers will crave more. —PHIL T.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



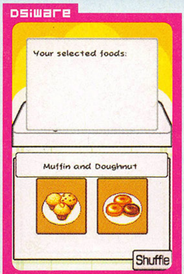
LITTLEST PET SHOP

PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
GENRE: **SIMULATION**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

Only the youngest Littlest Pet Shop fans will enjoy this scaled-down virtual pet. With just a few basic activities (brushing, catch, etc.) and a trio of simple minigames available to play with, though, even that audience may get bored before long. —PHIL T.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



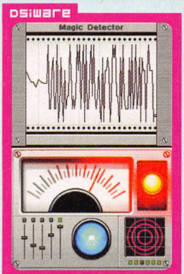
MASTER OF ILLUSION EXPRESS: MATCHMAKER

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **ALTERNATIVE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

The age-guessing portion of Matchmaker is terrible; it's painfully obvious how the trick works. The compatibility test is more clever, but it hardly feels like a magic trick and it relies on having a cooperative target. —CHRIS H.

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



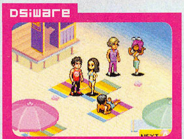
MASTER OF ILLUSION EXPRESS: MIND PROBE

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **ALTERNATIVE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Mind Probe is one of the more clever and diverse tricks from Master of Illusion. Whether that's worth two bucks depends on your affinity for magic. Kids will probably get a kick out of befuddling friends and family. —STEVE T.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



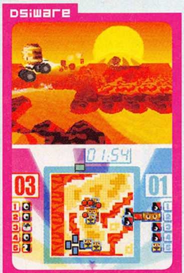
MIAMI NIGHTS: LIFE IN THE SPOTLIGHT

PUBLISHER: **GAMELOFT**
GENRE: **SIMULATION**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

Miami Nights is very similar to Gameloft's earlier DSiWare social simulator, American Popstar. Instead of attempting to become a singer, though, this game has you living the life of a swinging single in sunny Florida. The wide variety of locations to explore, people to interact with, and attributes to adjust makes this a fairly deep game. The controls can be awkward, but they don't distract too much. —PHIL T.

Recommended

DSiWARE



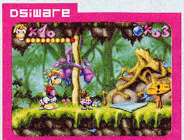
POP ISLAND

PUBLISHER: **ODENIS STUDIO**
GENRE: **ACTION**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

This Capture the Flag variant looks and sounds great, and it plays pretty well, too (even if aiming your weapon can be tricky). It was clearly designed for multiplayer, and luckily it supports DS Download Play. Even so, the action grows stale after a few matches. —PHIL T.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



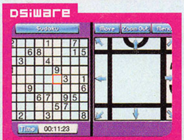
RAYMAN

PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
GENRE: **PLATFORMER**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

It's been more than 14 years since we were first introduced to Rayman (I feel old), but the limbless hero's debut platformer holds up pretty well in this faithful port. The action feels tight, and the game does a nice job of continually introducing new abilities, encouraging you to revisit levels and uncover new secrets. It's not bad to look at, either; the environments are lush, vibrant, and teeming with little animated touches. Just be prepared for a stiff challenge. —STEVE T.

Recommended

DSiWARE



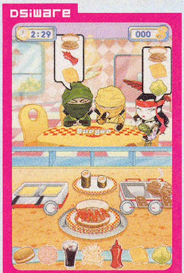
SUDOKU CHALLENGE!

PUBLISHER: **DIGITAL LEISURE**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Simply put, there are better DSiWare sudoku games to spend your money on. Both Hudson's Sudoku Master and EA's Sudoku have easier-to-use interfaces and more options, and they're both more newbie-friendly. The one unique thing Sudoku Challenge! has going for it is Grand Sudoku mode (which combines five puzzles into one), but that's not reason enough to download this title. —CHRIS H.

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



YUMMY YUMMY COOKING JAM

PUBLISHER: **VIRTUAL TOYS**
GENRE: **ACTION**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Although essentially the same as its WiiWare counterpart, this version of Yummy Yummy Cooking Jam plays a bit better thanks to responsive touch-screen controls. The menu is still limited, however, and the Career mode moves very slowly. —CHRIS H.

Hmmm...

2010

THE HOLIDAY SEASON video game rush has come and gone, and right about now you're probably wondering what's next for our beloved Wii and Nintendo DS systems. Well, we'll tell you: games. Great games. 49 pages' worth! We've got fresh looks at the titles you'll want to keep an eye out for, from NBA Jam to Sin and Punishment 2 to Pokémon HeartGold and SoulSilver Versions. While many more games won't be revealed until E3 this June, we think you'll agree that 2010 is already shaping up to be a banner year for Nintendo gaming. So what are you waiting for? Turn the page—the future awaits!

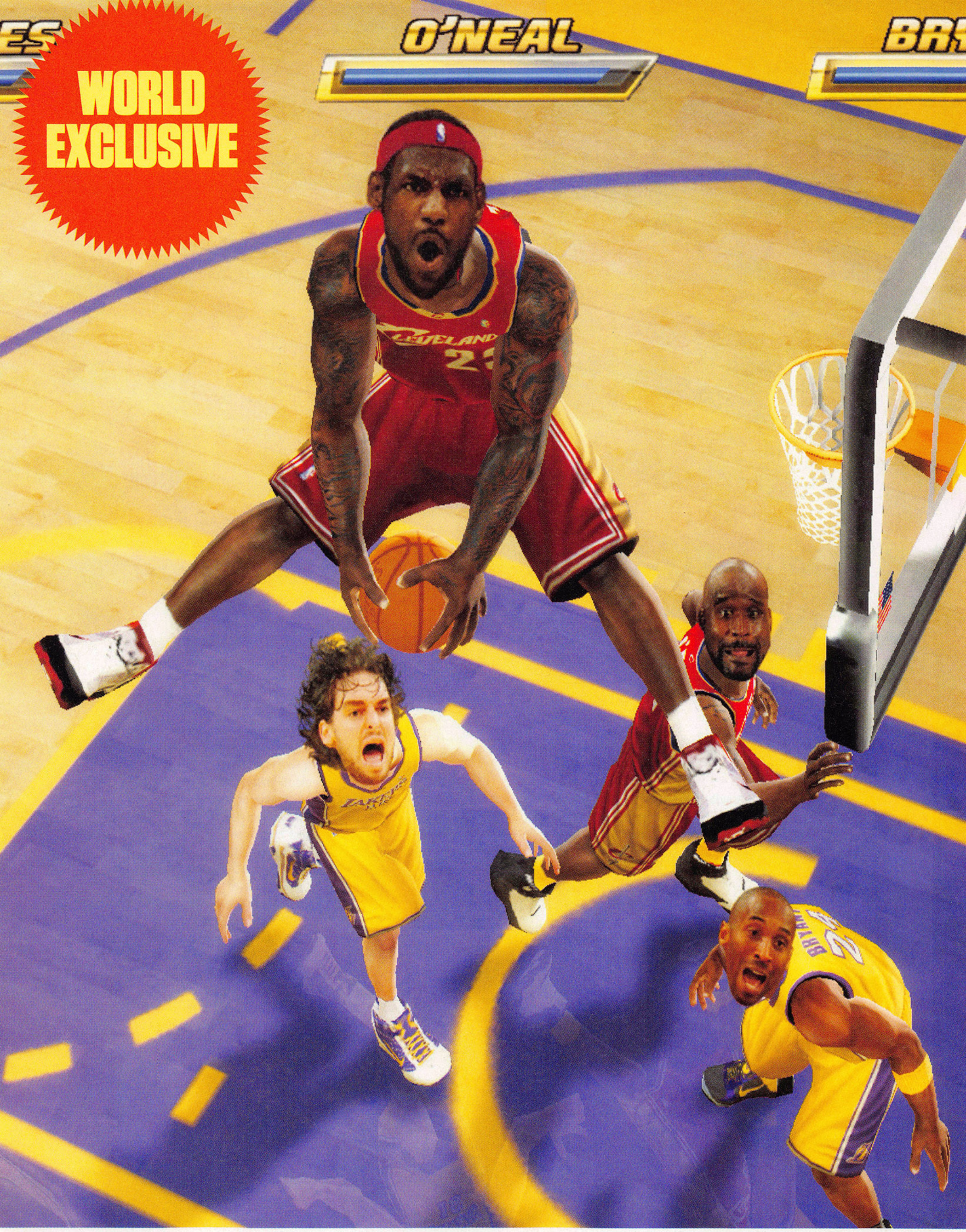
The YEAR in PREVIEW

Wii

Arc Rise Fantasia PAGE 77
Calling PAGE 58
Endless Ocean: Blue World PAGE 57
Epic Mickey PAGE 62
Flip's Twisted World PAGE 69
Fragile Dreams: Farewell Ruins of the Moon PAGE 36
The Grinder PAGE 39
Iron Man 2 PAGE 66
Line Attack Heroes PAGE 69
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest PAGE 52
Lost in Shadow PAGE 58
Metroid: Other M PAGE 73
MLB 2K10 PAGE 65
Monado: Beginning of the World PAGE 42
Monster Hunter Tri PAGE 60
NBA Jam PAGE 28
Red Steel 2 PAGE 49
Rooms: The Main Building PAGE 36
Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love PAGE 76
Sengoku Basara Samurai Heroes PAGE 38
Shiren the Wanderer PAGE 74
Sin and Punishment 2 PAGE 40
Sonic and Sega All-Stars Racing PAGE 47
Span Smasher PAGE 48
Super Mario Galaxy 2 PAGE 37
Super Monkey Ball Step & Roll PAGE 68
Trauma Team PAGE 43

DS

Again PAGE 43
Ace Attorney Investigations: Miles Edgeworth PAGE 46
Blue Dragon: Awakened Shadow PAGE 68
Deca Sports DS PAGE 48
Dementium II PAGE 38
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Reverie PAGE 58
Foto Showdown PAGE 74
Ghost Trick PAGE 44
Golden Sun DS PAGE 65
Infinite Space PAGE 77
Iron Man 2 PAGE 66
Nintendo DSi XL PAGE 49
Picross 3D PAGE 42
Pokémon HeartGold Version PAGE 75
Pokémon SoulSilver Version PAGE 75
Puzzle Quest 2 PAGE 69
Ragnarok DS PAGE 42
Rooms: The Main Building PAGE 36
Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey PAGE 70
Sonic and Sega All-Stars Racing PAGE 47
WarioWare D.I.Y. PAGE 65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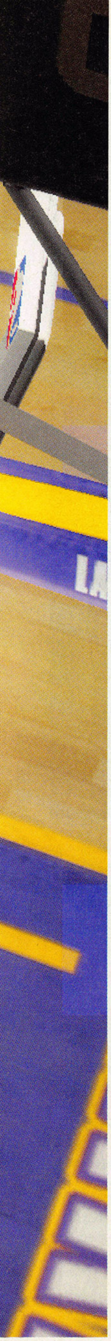
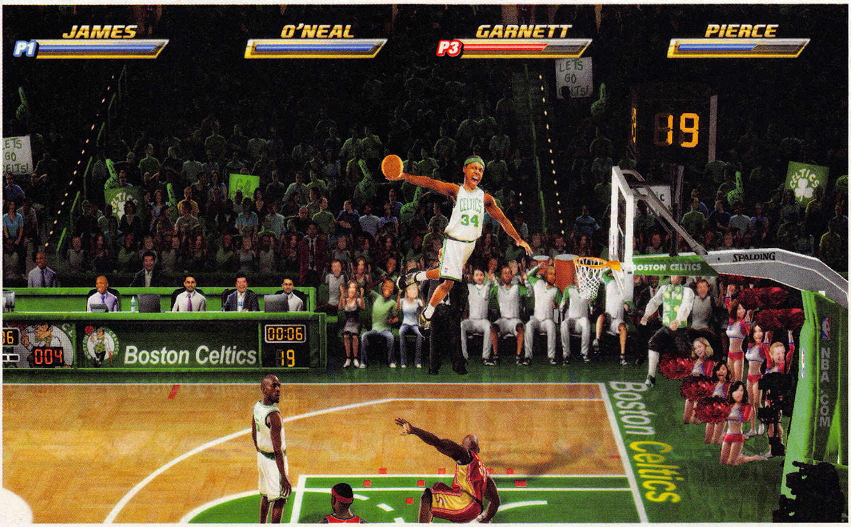


BOOM SHAKALAKA!

Court is back in session! **NBA Jam** returns exclusively on Wii, taking arcade-style hoops to a whole new level.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PIERCE
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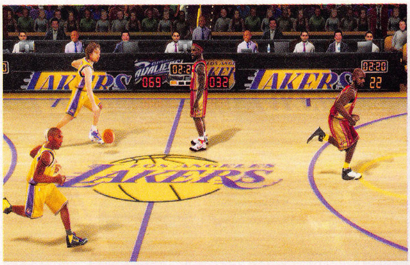
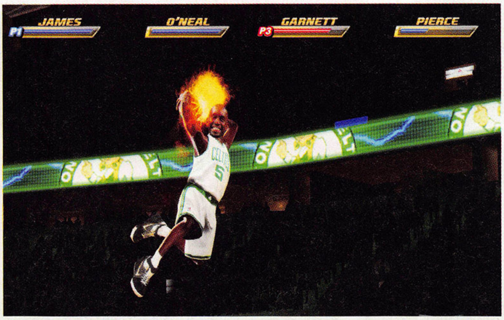
Boston Celtics
Boston Celtics
NBA.COM

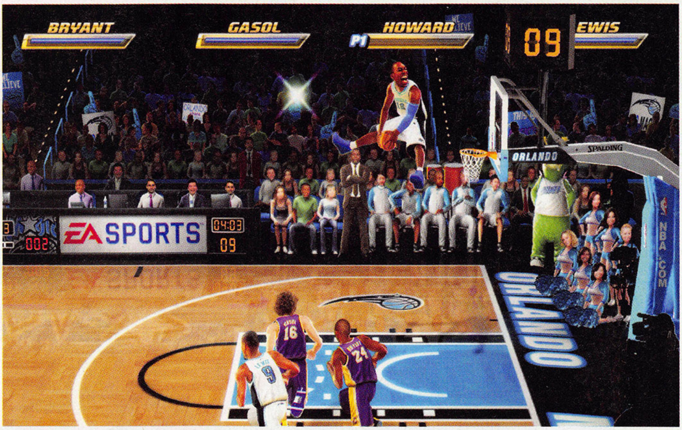
BY STEVE THOMASON

PUBLISHER: **EA SPORTS** DEVELOPER: **EA CANADA** RELEASE: **FALL** Wii





Like Kevin Garnett, anything is possible.



W

We love innovation and newfangled technology as much as the next guy, but if you ask us, the crowning achievement of this video game generation may prove to be the torrent of awesome retro revivals. Look at what we've got already: A new side-scrolling Mario platformer? Check. A hardcore Contra sequel? Check. Not one, but *two* helpings of 8-bit Mega Man? Check. This fall, another nostalgic dream comes true when EA Sports brings back NBA Jam in all of its high-flying, backboard-shattering, cranium-inflating glory. Old-school is officially on fire.

Unlike the franchise's previous attempts at a comeback, this Wii-exclusive update follows closely in the flashing sneakers of the 1993 arcade original. "Our motto is 'Be true to Jam,'" declares the new installment's creative director, Trey Smith. "That entails the look, play, feel, sound...all across the board." The result is NBA Jam as nature intended it, with frenetic two-on-two action, awesomely goofy digitized faces, and enough razzle-dazzle to make David Stern's head explode. Of course, the game includes a number

INTERVIEW

JAM SECRETS

The father of NBA Jam, Mark Turmell, talks about schooling the NBA, a fateful trip to Burger King, and keeping Michael Jordan happy.

ON THE GENESIS OF THE SERIES...

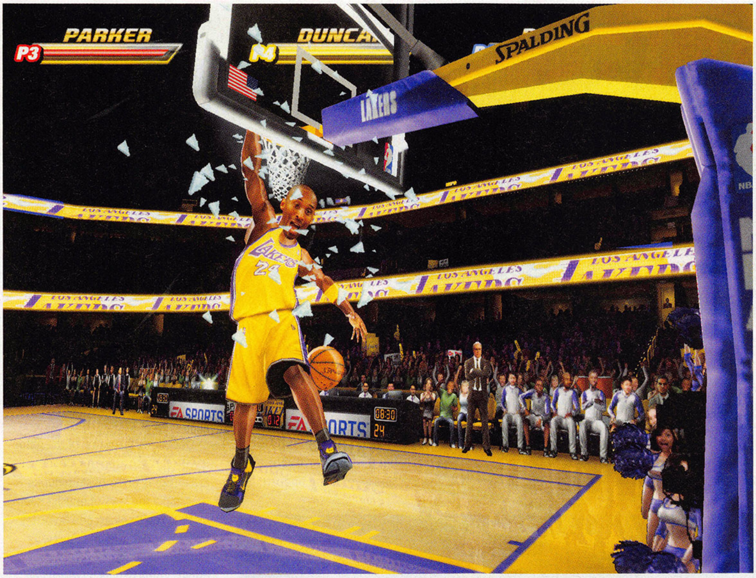
I hired an art director, John Tobias, to work with me on Smash TV. After that project was finished, we all got together and asked, "OK, what's the next trend? What can our hardware really do in that coin-op space?" And digitized images were the hook that we came up with. So John went and worked with Ed Boon on Mortal Kombat and I chose to do a basketball game being a big fan of the sport.

At first, we actually weren't going to have individual heads. We had shot video of basketball moves, and were just going to use those, but the president of the company came down and said, "You can't have the same head for every player. You need to have different heads for each one." And I tried to argue that, technically, you know, I'm not sure if we can do that. But when he walked out of the room, we all kind of thought about it and said, "Yeah, we can do that." [Laughs] So we called the NBA and we started pursuing the license. It's funny—at the time, the NBA immediately turned us down, because especially in New York City, where their headquarters are, the idea of an arcade was very much of a seedy, drug-riddled place. And they flat-out said, "We don't want our logo in an arcade." And we're thinking, "Hey, what's wrong with arcades?" [Laughs]

So we went around and got video footage of standard family entertainment centers to show them that an arcade is actually a legitimate location. Yes, there are these bars and seedier arcades, but that's not the norm. So we kind of had to educate them over the course of a few months, and we showed them the game, and they finally came around.

ON CREATING FIRE...

I was actually walking to Burger King. [Laughs] The



IT'S IN THE GAME

If you're going to bring back NBA Jam, there are certain elements that absolutely must be included (and one that must not). Fortunately, the developers of the new Wii game are committed to delivering on all fronts.

Fire	✓
Shattering backboard	✓
Cheats	✓
Flashing shoes	✓
Flashing ball	✓
Big Head mode	✓
Legends	✓
Playable mascots	✓
Secret characters	✓
Corrupt referees	

of enhancements and modern-day accoutrements, but all with an eye toward evolving the experience rather than reinventing it. As Smith puts it, "We're essentially asking, 'What would [the original developers] do today if they were making NBA Jam for the first time?'"

Fortuitously, Smith and his team have actually been able to pose that question to none other than series creator Mark Turmell. After joining EA Tiburon a few months ago, Turmell caught wind of a new NBA Jam in development at the publisher's Vancouver studio and immediately offered his counsel. "Having Mark on board—seeing his reaction and getting his input—has been amazing," enthuses Smith. "And he's already challenged us on some serious stuff. He's absolutely making the game better. We're very thankful to have him." Likewise, Turmell feels confident that his brainchild is in good hands. "The passion that these guys bring to the table is what set me at ease immediately," he explains. "They really are being true to the game."

BALL HANDLING

Those familiar with NBA Jam's complicated history—the license previously belonged to Midway, then Acclaim—may be wondering how this project came about. According to Smith, it all started as a desire to give Wii players a triple-A basketball title to call their own. "We know people aren't going to Wii for their simulation sports titles," he says. "They're looking for that 15-minute fix or a situation where they've got a bunch of people over and they want to play together. So we knew that's where we wanted to take basketball. And Jam was always going to be the inspiration anyway, so when we did some sniffing around and discovered that we could get the license, we pounced on it."

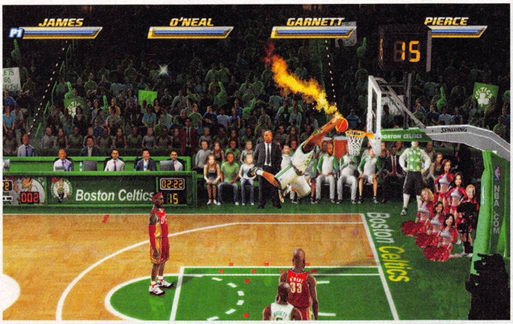
From there, the team's first order of business was figuring out how to translate NBA Jam's classic gameplay to the Wii Remote

art director on the project was more into realistic, sim-type visuals. I had brought up the idea of doing a fire effect on the ball and he was just dead-set against it. He said, "Absolutely not. That's ridiculous." [Laughs] I still thought it was a good idea, but I couldn't mock it up because I couldn't generate the art myself. So I was walking over to this Burger King across from Midway with one of the other programmers, and he reminded me that I had explosions from Smash TV. So as soon as I got back from Burger King, I put in those explosions trailing the ball. And my art director was so ticked off about how ugly it looked that he started working on the fire that night. [Laughs]

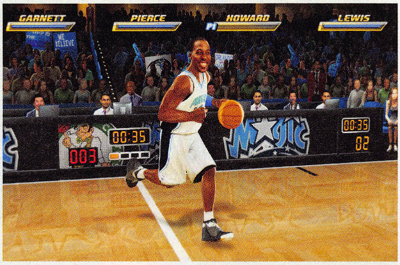
ON CUSTOM CABINETS...

Right when the game shipped, we started getting some weird phone calls. One was from Shaq's agent. He said that they wanted to buy a cabinet. So we told him he could go to his local distributor and gave him the address. And he was like, "No, no, no. We need it right now." It was sort of against our distributor policy to send out cabinets directly, but we asked him what he needed. So he called us back and said, "OK, we need two games. One is going to be sent to Orlando to Shaq's house, and the other one we need sent to New York." We actually ended up sending a full arcade cabinet to a hotel in New York. And [Shaq's team at the time, the Orlando Magic] started traveling with the game. On road trips, they actually took the coin-op game, and they would wheel it up into one of the suites. It would travel with them on the team jet.

Another phone call came from Gary Payton, who was not in the game. The Sonics were represented by Shawn Kemp and [Benoit Benjamin]. He wanted to get a special version of the game that had him in it. So I was like, "OK, I can do that." We created it and sent it to him. And of course, we immediately get another phone call from him saying, "Well, you know, [Michael] Jordan is my friend, and he's over here and he's not in the game." That's because Jordan had dropped out of the NBA licensing agreement. But that was a business thing and Jordan might not have even been aware of that decision. The way Payton portrayed it, Jordan's pissed off that he's not in the game. So we made another special version that included Jordan. And that was easy because during our original location tests, we did have Jordan in the game. Kids in Chicago were playing with Jordan. So we sent him the ROMs for that. Then we get a phone call a week later telling us that Ken Griffey, Jr. wants to be in the game. [Laughs] So we did that too.


JAMES
O'NEAL
GARNETT
PIERCE
P1
15
Boston Celtics
Boston Celtics

[Left] As in the original game, you'll catch fire by sinking three shots in a row. That's when the dunks *really* get crazy.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controller. "We love the gesture controls," proclaims Smith. "It's one of the things that really make your experience on Wii unique. But at the same time, we don't want to bite off more than we can chew and muddy the waters with a whole lot of gestures. Jam's got to be responsive. So we're trying to be really smart with our use of gestures."

To that end, all of the game's motion controls are built around just two simple commands. Swiping the controller from side to side executes an evasive crossover dribble on offense and a steal attempt on defense. Shooting and blocking comprise a two-part gesture—you pull the Wii Remote up to jump, then flick forward to release the ball on offense or swat at it on defense. (The second part isn't required for a block, but it will improve your chances and give you an opportunity to come down with the ball.) That's it; everything else uses the same gestures with button modifiers (except passing, which is just a simple press of the A Button).

Of course, the name of the game is NBA Jam, so atop the moves list is a dazzling array of slam dunks that make the laws of physics seem quaint. You'll see arcade favorites like the 360 Statue of Liberty, as well as a selection of brand-new dunks, some of which launch you 40 feet above the rim. To pull one off, you simply hold the Turbo button and move toward the basket while using the same gestures you would to take a jump shot. Pulling the remote up will send your player airborne, and flicking

GASOL
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Where amazing happens
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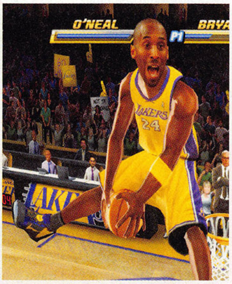
CAVALIERS


O'NEAL
BRYA
P1

[Above] You can't have NBA Jam without Big Head mode.

JOHNSON
SMITH
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KIDD
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EA SPORTS

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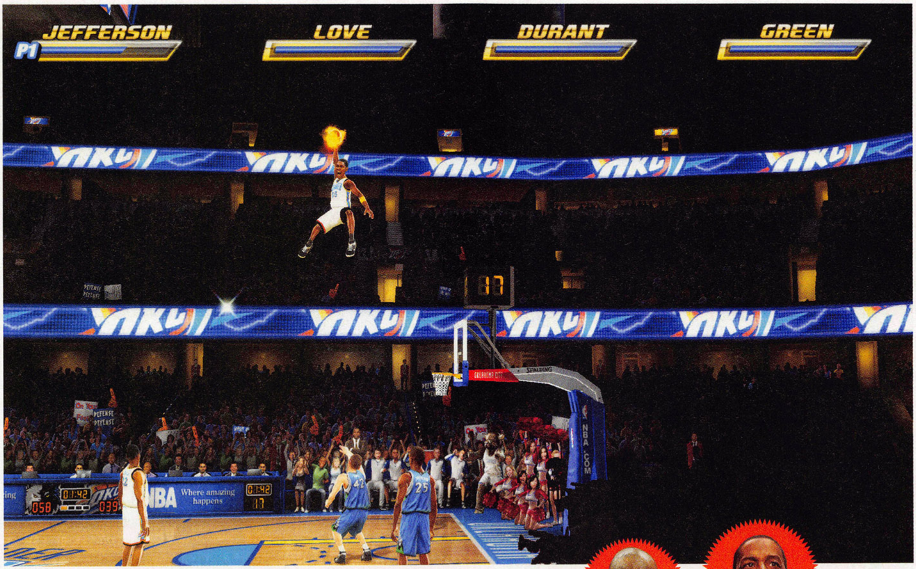
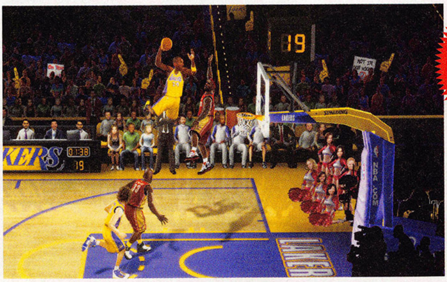
LOVE
DURANT
GREEN
P1
Where amazing happens
THUNDER



it forward will deliver the rock with authority. Likewise, holding Turbo while swiping the controller will execute the franchise's trademark shove. (As always, the only rules enforced in NBA Jam are shot-clock violations and goaltending.) New to this version, however, is a spin move that serves as a counter to the shove and uses the same Turbo-plus-swipe gesture when you've got the ball. This addition adds a nice risk-versus-reward element. Shoving gives you a better chance at a turnover than does a mere steal attempt, but if the ball handler times his spin move correctly, he can cause a shoving defender to stumble forward, giving the offense an open shot.

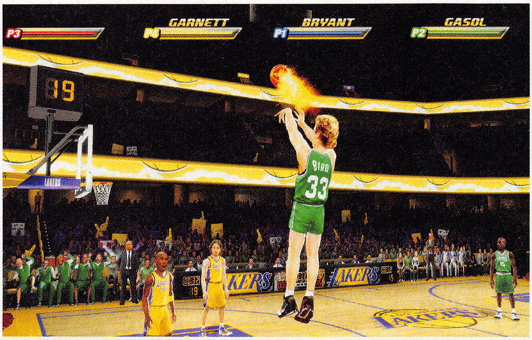
We had an opportunity to test-drive the motion controls, pitting the Cleveland Cavaliers' LeBron James and Shaquille O'Neal versus Kobe Bryant and Pau Gasol of the world champion Los Angeles Lakers. The verdict? We're sold. Everything felt extremely responsive and intuitive, and the gestures add a visceral "oomph" that enhances the NBA Jam experience rather than distracts from it. Oh, and for the record, King James and The Diesel pulled off a narrow two-point victory. How's that Shaq-Fu taste, Kobe?

As much as they believe in the motion controls, however, the developers don't want to shove them down people's throats. Therefore, you'll have the option to unplug the Nunchuk controller and play with



GAME FACES

Basketball players show a lot of emotion when they're on the court—from intensity to anger to "What the what?!" What better way to capture that than by using actual photographs for each character's head? That's what the NBA Jam team has done, utilizing different photographs for various situations. Every player in the game has three possible faces for when he's just running around the court, two dunk faces, plus a positive face and a negative face. While explaining the process, art director Rob Hilson remarks, "I'm scouring all of the latest and greatest high-res sports photography, and while you search the stuff, it's very evident that a lot of these guys pull the same faces for certain situations. Like Shaq? He always sticks his tongue out and crosses his eyes. "



BRYANT
GASOL
HOWARD
LEWIS
MAGIC

[Left] Is Kobe in awe of Larry Bird's jump shot or his luxurious mullet?

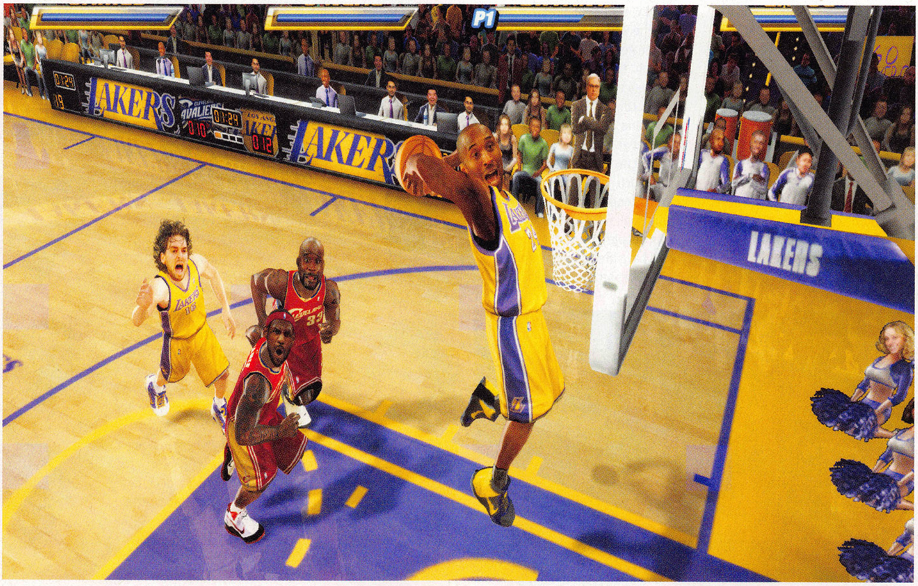
the Wii Remote turned sideways. "That was something we learned from Punch-Out!! in particular," says Smith. "We wanted to leave it up to the fans; if they want to play the old-fashioned way, rock out. You can do everything you can with the gesture controls."

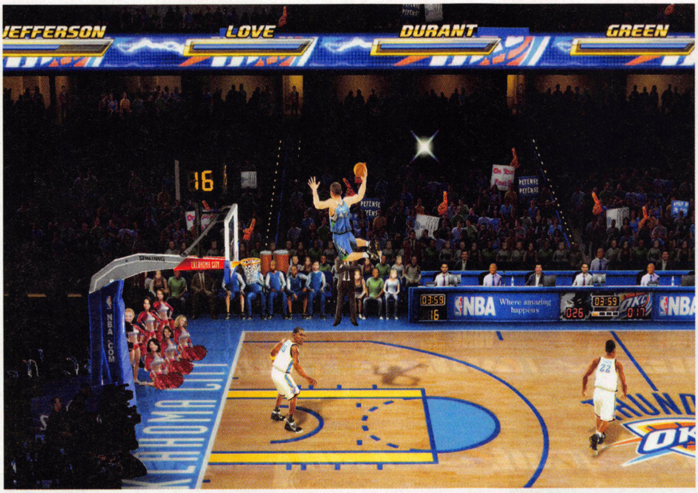
PLAYING WITH STYLE

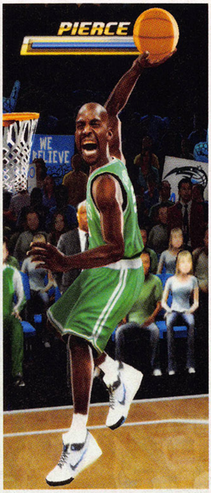
As you can see from the screenshots on these pages, the team's "Be true to Jam" mantra extends to the visual style, as well. "Once we got word that the Jam license was available, we immediately knew what this game needed to look like," recalls art director Rob Hilson. "It has to be photo-real, glossy, shiny. Going back to the way the game was presented in the original was crucial. I was like, 'I'm not making this a cartoon, we're not going to do this, we're not going to do that. I'll quit! It has to look like NBA Jam and that's all there is to it!"

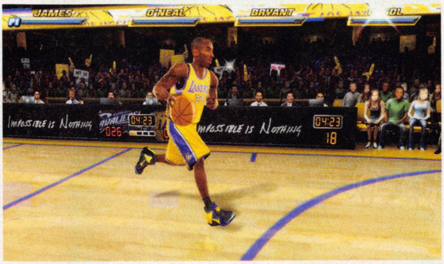
One of arcade game's defining characteristics was its use of digitized characters. It was a novel idea at the time, and the current team has implemented a similarly unorthodox approach: combining polygonal 3-D bodies with 2-D heads clipped from high-res photographs. With this process, "You get the player likenesses and there's just no subjectivity," says Hilson. "Jam delivered that likeness for the first time in video games, and I feel like we've found a way to emulate that and bring it forward." Different photos are used for various situations (see the "Game Faces" sidebar), giving the players a unique level of expressiveness that really brings out the game's personality. "So if you've just done a massive dunk, you'll see the player's 'positive' face when he's running back up the court," offers Hilson as an example. "You get those little moments of reaction, and it feels like the character is interacting with the user." A subtle blur is implemented between photo transitions to fool your eye and prevent them from looking too jarring. Overall, the technique works brilliantly and makes for one of the few sports games that will intentionally have you laughing out loud.

The other big task in front of Hilson was to update the surroundings. "It's about capturing that look and presentation, and bringing the quality to where it delivers the same impact that [the original] Jam had in its time," he explains. "So what we've done is taken this layout, been true to it, and added a little more glitz on top of it so you can do an intro









sequence, for example. We want to give you the feeling that this is a massive show and there are a lot of people here to see you at this very special NBA event. You've got the JumboTron, the camera flashes, the signage wiggling around—everything in the background reacts to what's happening on the court. This is an arcade game, so it's just popping and fanatical and makes you feel like you're doing something spectacular." A lot of work has gone into boosting the authenticity, as well. Whereas the original game was limited to team colors on uniforms and on the court, you've now got everything from team-specific coaches, cheerleaders, and mascots to the proper wood tone for each venue.

SEASON TICKET

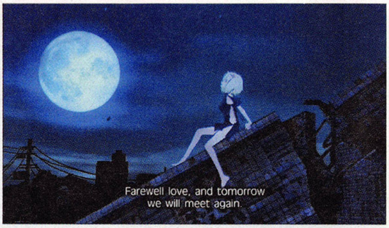
For all its style, NBA Jam also promises plenty of substance. The game has that instant arcade accessibility, but beneath the surface, there's a whole other layer of depth. Much of that comes from selecting your personnel. Every team has three players to choose from, each with his own unique attributes. As Smith asserts, "Once you know all the things you can do on the court, it becomes about who you're doing them with. Who does what best and who doesn't do certain things very well? It really comes down to those player-specific stats. What are their strengths? What are their weaknesses? What about your teammate? At halftime, you can sub people in and out. How does that affect your strategy?"

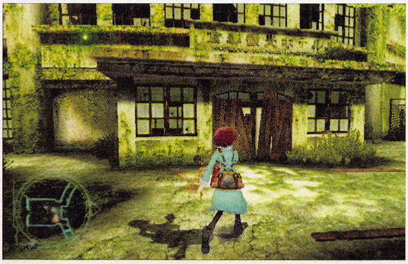
You'll be tasked with answering those questions in two main game modes. The first is the Classic Campaign, in which your objective is simply to go from worst to first by defeating all 29 other teams (either solo or with a friend.) "We knew we had to add some new stuff, but it was important that we had this safe haven for the old-school Jam fans where we didn't muck with the formula," notes Smith. "We don't throw in any power-ups or crazy stuff that wasn't there before. We take the fans back to their happy place." But while the core experience remains familiar, the creative director reveals that his team does have a few surprises up their sleeves. "You know, maybe introducing some legendary boss battles here and there," he teases. "We've also got a really cool achievement system that'll be a big part of it. That's how you'll unlock secret characters and that kind of thing." Asked if those secret characters will include politicians—a series tradition—Smith responds coyly, "We're going to be as true to the original NBA Jam as possible."

The other primary game mode is the Remix Tour, which introduces some more-drastic changes. "This is where we're going to play around a little bit," explains Smith. "A lot of it is about the razzle-dazzle, the rock-star atmosphere, the smoke and lasers and playing up the human highlight reel kind of stuff. It's us kind of using those core mechanics of the game and then doing some simple rule tweaks, maybe a camera tweak here and there, and just kind of playing with some new stuff. Our thinking was, this would be Dynasty mode if Nintendo were to design it, meaning you have no idea what's coming next." Unfortunately, Smith isn't quite ready to share specifics: "We've got a strong game plan in place for this, but there's still some stuff in flux, so we don't really want to mention anything in great detail."

Another time, then. For now, we're plenty excited by the prospect of another awesome retro revival, and the long-overdue opportunity to remind that backboard who's boss.

FRAGILE DREAMS: FAREWELL RUINS OF THE MOON


Farewell love, and tomorrow
we will meet again.

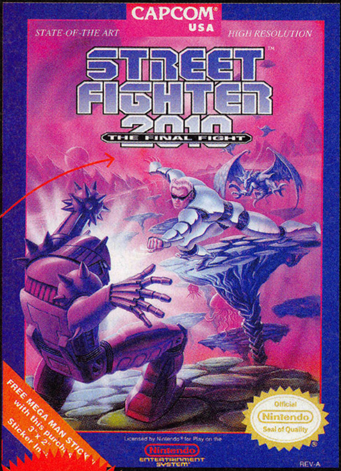


The game formerly known as Fragile: Farewell Ruins of the Moon is on track for an early 2010 release, and as publisher XSEED had hoped, they've managed to fit both the original Japanese voice track and a competent new English dub onto the disc. Fragile Dreams stars a young boy who is, as far as he knows, the last survivor of a mysterious incident that has wiped humanity off of Earth. With a flashlight in hand, he travels through quietly decaying subways, amusement parks, and hotels on his quest to reach Tokyo Tower, where the bright lights hint at possible human activity.

The North American version of Fragile Dreams retains the clumsy, button-mashing combat of the Japanese original, and the developers' focus on mood over gameplay will likely turn off some players. But those looking to engage in a more thoughtful experience should revel in Fragile Dreams's unique settings and haunting atmosphere. The game is a rare art film on a platform packed with mainstream blockbusters. —CASEY L.

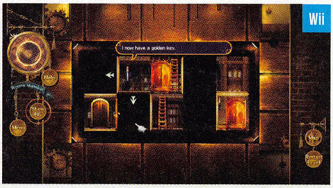
PUBLISHER:
XSEED
DEVELOPER:
TRI-CRESCENDO
RELEASE:
MARCH
Wii

KEN IN 2010


CAPCOM USA
STATE-OF-THE ART
HIGH RESOLUTION
STREET FIGHTER 2010
THE FINAL FIGHT
FREE MEGA MAN STICK...
with this purch...
3"x2"
Sticker In...
Official Nintendo Seal of Quality
Licensed by Nintendo® for Play on the
Nintendo ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
REV-A

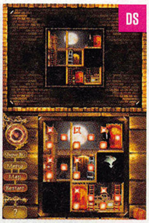
"HI, THERE! I'M KEN. YOU MIGHT KNOW ME FROM MY STREET-FIGHTING DAYS ALONGSIDE MY BUDDY RYU. IT'S THE YEAR 2010 NOW, AND I'VE BEEN OUT OF THE FIGHTING GAME FOR 25 YEARS. THESE DAYS I'M A SCIENTIST, AND MY MODERN-DAY ADVENTURES WERE CHRONICLED IN CAPCOM'S 1990 NES TITLE, STREET FIGHTER 2010: THE FINAL FIGHT. I'LL POP UP THROUGHOUT THIS FEATURE WITH HELPFUL ADVICE AND INFO THAT WILL SERVE YOU WELL THIS YEAR!"

Words of wisdom inspired by Ken's actual in-game adventures!


Wii
I now have a golden key.

Rooms: The Main Building

The stylized noir visuals may make Rooms: The Main Building look like a mystery game, but the only mystery here is which way to move the sliding tiles to get your character—a rather proper gentleman in a top hat—to each level's exit. The game, you see, is based on those sliding-picture puzzles where there's only one empty space and, in this case, between 6 and 16 tiles. Making things even more interesting, the tiles themselves have unique properties: some have ladders for climbing, others offer telephones that teleport the player, and some have hazards to avoid. —RANDY N.

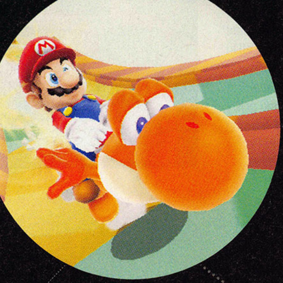


PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: **HUDSON** RELEASE: **SPRING** Wii DS

It isn't often that we get two new Mario games in back-to-back years, and a single system hasn't hosted three of them since the NES, but both will happen when Super Mario Galaxy 2 joins New Super Mario Bros. Wii and the first Super Mario Galaxy on the Wii console sometime in 2010. We couldn't be more excited to return to the stars in what has to be the year's most anticipated sequel. Why? We'll give you five good reasons. **–CHRIS SL.**

THE FIVE COOLEST THINGS ABOUT SUPER MARIO GALAXY 2 (That We Know About)

PUBLISHER/
DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO**
RELEASE: **TBD**
Wii



1

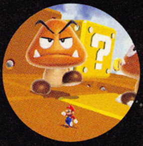
YOSHI!

As New Super Mario Bros. Wii recently proved, everything is better with Yoshi. Not only does the green gobbler remind us of our flutter-jumping Super NES glory days, but he also adds a fun change of pace to any level he's stashed away in. In Super Mario Galaxy 2, Yoshi can eat special fruit to change color and gain new powers such as a turbo dash or the ability to float Mario up to higher areas. He can also swing on his tongue to carry Mario across bottomless pits, which cements his standing as Mario's top option for green transportation (not that you don't give great piggyback rides, Luigi).

2

A TOUGHER CHALLENGE

Following Nintendo's recent trend of giving gamers a tougher time (see New Super Mario Bros. Wii and The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks), the levels in Galaxy 2 have been built under the assumption that those who beat the first game have become better players. The stages will therefore have more strategic depth, with extra play mechanics like Yoshi and the spinning drill, giving Mario masters a lot more to plumb.



3

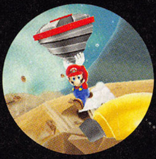
ALL-NEW GALAXIES

While familiar elements will return (hello again, Megaleg!), Mario will have brand-new galaxies and worlds to discover. The stages shown in the game's first trailer and screenshots illustrate new kinds of gameplay, as well as classic Mario standbys such as a "big world" where even Goombas tower over our hero. Galaxy 2 is shaping up to be a great mix of unexpected new ideas and old favorites.

4

COOL NEW PUZZLES

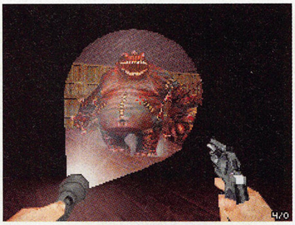
No one would call the first Galaxy a puzzle game, but players were challenged to put Mario's moves to use in creative ways, from mastering the slingshot pull of gravity to working out the correct path trough turning, twisting areas. The sequel promises to bend gamers' brains a little further with new elements such as a drill that Mario can use to dig through the center of a planet, plus the ability to freeze water into ice, slow time, and more.



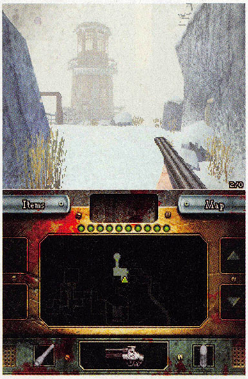
5

MORE OF THE STUFF WE LOVE

Although we're always up for the next brilliant new twist in the Mario series, it would have been a shame not to revisit the wonderfully unique premise of Super Mario Galaxy. The game was so fresh and full of new ideas that one helping simply wasn't enough. In addition to more gravity-defying action, our early peek at the game confirmed the return of Stars, Star Piece challenges, and the beloved Bee Mario, among other things. This is the sequel to the game we named as the Wii console's very best title in our 20th anniversary issue—what more could we want?



Dementium II



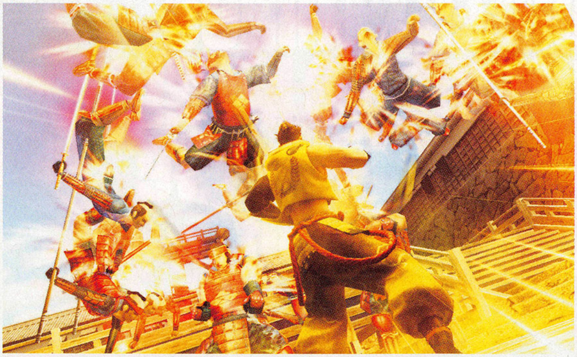
Blood spray. Mutilated intestines. Fanged beasts with meat hooks for hands. These are not the kind of things you typically run into in the average DS title. Fortunately for handheld-gaming horror fans, the upcoming M-rated follow-up to Renegade Kid's freaky first-person gorefest has all of that good stuff and more. Dementium II aims to ramp up the creepiness and dish out even more thrills and chills than its predecessor.

You play as the same mental patient from the original game, only this time you've been captured and had your brain tinkered with. A crafty escape from your dirty cell in the military-style prison compound thrusts you into a nightmarish slugfest that plane-shifts between the real world and a hell-like alternate reality. Many of the criticisms leveled at the first game have been fixed and tweaked in Dementium II, and the second grisly adventure covers a much larger scope. Shanking, blasting, and bashing your way through a whole new slew of insidious evil entities just might leave you sleeping with the lights on. —**NATHAN M.**

PUBLISHER: **SOUTHPEAK INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **RENEGADE KID**
RELEASE: **FEBRUARY**
DS

KEN IN 2010

"IN THE YEAR 2010, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO OPEN WARP GATES TO OTHER WORLDS THROUGH THE RITUAL SACRIFICE OF STRANGE CREATURES!"



SENGOKU BASARA SAMURAI HEROES

The newest chapter of Japan's fast-growing Sengoku Basara series (previously localized here as Devil Kings) is on its way to Wii. Like its predecessors, Samurai Heroes is a large-scale beat-'em-up set in feudal Japan. It's similar to Koei's Dynasty Warrior series, but with more of a focus on flashy combat and much less of an emphasis on historical accuracy—for example, one of the new "samurai" in this installment is a redheaded woman dressed in a bustier and with a dozen matchlock pistols strapped to her leg. Who knew 16th-century world history could be so much fun? —**CASEY L.**

PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM**
RELEASE: **TBD**
Wii

THE GRINDER

High Voltage Software, the company responsible for the designed-from-the-ground-up-for-Wii first-person shooter The Conduit, is setting aside that game's sci-fi trappings and tapping into the world of grindhouse-style horror films for its next shooter, The Grinder.

The stylized (and likely M-rated) FPS centers on a group of monster hunters on an alternate Earth where vampires, werewolves, and the like are real. There are four playable characters: Hector, a Mexican bounty hunter; Doc, who—as his name suggests—is a doctor; Miko, a Japanese assassin; and AJ, the sole survivor of a slasher attack on her sorority.

All of the hunters are tough cookies, taking the fight to the monsters rather than sneaking around in the shadows. The game is being designed for two-player co-op play locally and via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection, and will also include a traditional competitive component. As in The Conduit, you'll be able to customize the controls to the *n*th degree, but there's also going to be support for the Wii MotionPlus accessory to (hopefully) make for an even better FPS experience. —**RANDY N.**

PUBLISHER: **TBD**
DEVELOPER:
HIGH VOLTAGE SOFTWARE
RELEASE: **TBD**
Wii

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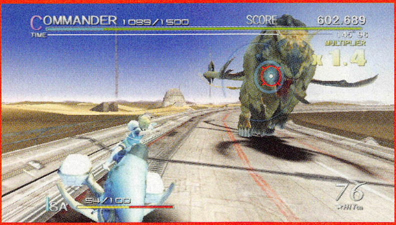
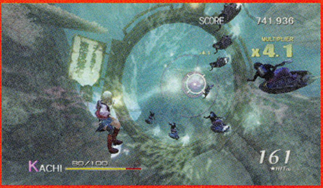
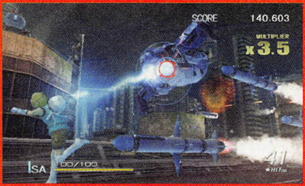
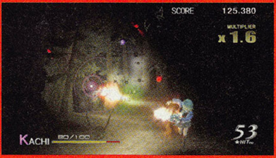
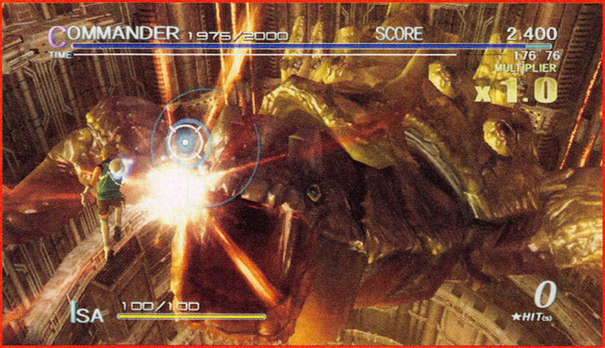

COMMANDER 1089/1500
TIME
SCORE 602.689
MULTIPLIER
x1.4
ISA 54/100
76
★HIT(S)


SCORE 741.936
MULTIPLIER
x4.1
KACHI 80/100
161
★HIT(S)


SCORE 140.603
MULTIPLIER
x3.5
ISA 100/100
41
★HIT(S)


SCORE 125.380
MULTIPLIER
x1.6
KACHI 80/100
53
★HIT(S)


COMMANDER 1975/2000
TIME
SCORE 2.400
176 76
MULTIPLIER
x1.0
ISA 100/100
0
★HIT(S)

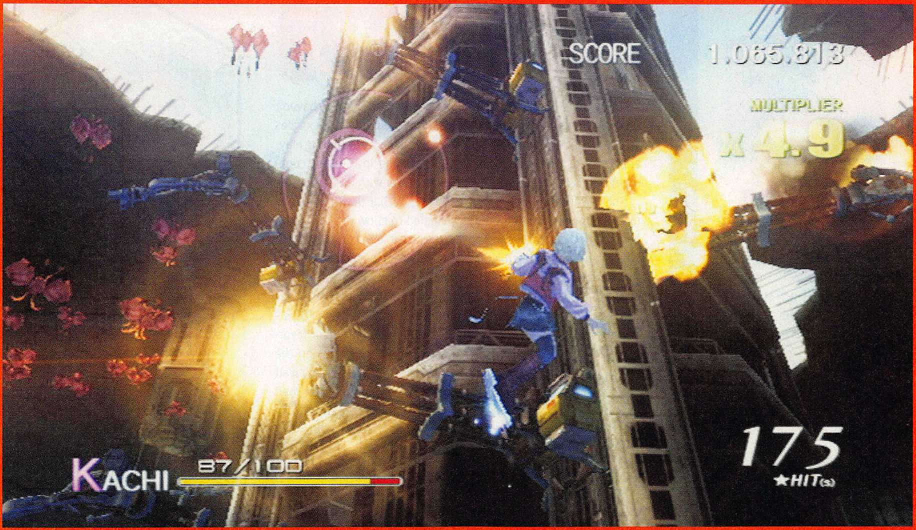
THE WAGES OF SIN

Sin and Punishment 2 invites players to shoot first, and stab people later.

WHEN TALKING ABOUT GAMES, the word *shooter* has a broad range of meanings that spans everything from third-person action titles to light-gun games and old-school side-scrollers. Somehow, Sin and Punishment 2 manages to be a shooter in *every* sense of the word, rapidly morphing from genre to genre over the course of its seven lengthy missions. Slowly scrolling areas evoke the deliberate positioning of games like R-Type and Gradius, before suddenly kicking into high-speed flight sequences reminiscent of Space Harrier or Panzer Dragoon, pausing only for a one-on-one midair swordfight straight out of the Psychic Force series. Not that Sin and Punishment 2 is by any means a derivative game; some parts of it come straight out of nowhere, such as a haunted forest chase in which your crosshairs double as a flashlight to illuminate the incoming shuriken from an army of mutant ninjas. Where the hell did *that* come from? Half the fun of Sin and Punishment is its WarioWare-esque randomness; you never know what's coming next, but you'll quickly learn to trust that it will be cleverly designed, brutally tough, and unlike any other segment of the game.

Sin and Punishment 2 can manage this level of range because of all the options it puts at your fingertips. Offensive actions are all mapped to the Wii Remote controller, and targeted with the pointer. You can fire a rapid-fire series of blasts, charge up a devastating shot that causes a screen-spanning explosion, or swing a blade that deals heavy damage to nearby foes as well as knocking away enemy projectiles or redirecting them toward your crosshairs. With the Nunchuk, you can move your character in any direction, thanks to a new jet pack that gives you the ability to hover freely. You can also jump (why you'd want to do this when you can fly isn't quite clear), or press the Z Button to perform a high-speed roll in any direction to become invulnerable to damage.

In any other game, this powerful repertoire of moves would make you unstoppable. But Treasure has upped the ante on the enemy side as well. You say you can wipe out


SCORE 1.065.813
MULTIPLIER
x 4.9
KACHI 87/100
175
★HIT(s)

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** DEVELOPER: **TREASURE** RELEASE: **TBD** Wii

662.850
ISA
120

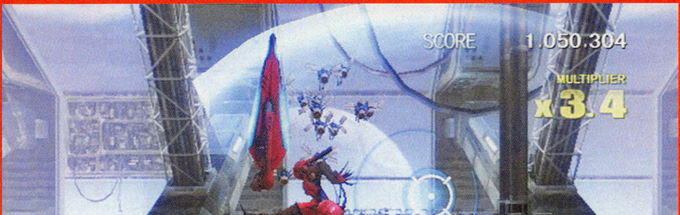
20 enemies with a single charged shot? Well there are 40 more waiting just offscreen. Trying to stay alive by repeatedly using your invincible roll? The game will just throw so many different attacks at you from so many angles that you'll run out of safe directions in which to flee. Sin and Punishment 2 is an extremely difficult game, but in the best possible way; each time you retry a segment or rebattle a boss, you'll learn something new that will make it just a little bit easier. And thanks to infinite continues and a generous number of midstage checkpoints, you'll have plenty of learning opportunities.

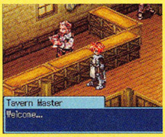
With its boundless creatively and immaculately tuned level design, Sin and Punishment 2 should give the Wii console a welcome shot of adrenaline when it launches later this year. —CASEY L.

ちょっ！ 何だこいつ！ 暴れるな！

あいにく俺は、神なんて信じちゃいないんでな！

As you might have guessed from the text in some of these shots, all of the screens on these pages are taken from the Japanese version of the game.


SCORE 1.050.304
MULTIPLIER
x 3.4
ISA 71/100
153
★HIT(s)



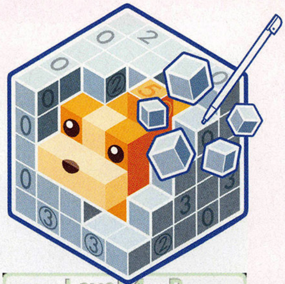
Tavern Master
Welcome...

Ragnarok DS

A wise man once told us that "hell is other people." The DS version of Ragnarok, then, takes the popular Korean online RPG and renders the experience a little less hellish. It has the same almost-real-time combat and the same kind of versatile character development—including a fistful of different jobs for each hero in the party to try, from Hunter to Assassin to Taekwon Master—but none of the grief of having to deal with other human players. **—DAVID S.**

PUBLISHER: XSEED
DEVELOPER: GUNGHO
RELEASE: FEBRUARY
DS

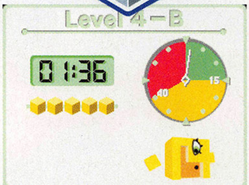
PICROSS 3D



You may have thought Picross DS was challenging, but you haven't seen anything yet. The popular "paint by number" logic puzzles are—as the title implies—going 3-D in this follow-up, requiring players to either save or destroy blocks (which make up a starting cube) to reveal a 3-D image such as a dog or a flower within.

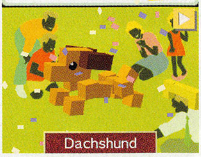
The reward for completing the puzzles is that they'll be added to ever-growing themed scenes designed to show off your math prowess and mastery of 3-D space. It's possible to complete a 3-D Picross and make a few mistakes in the process, but you won't earn the maximum three stars per puzzle.

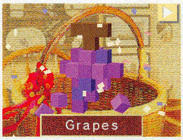
The standard puzzles are joined by timed challenges and ones where the game isn't forgiving at all of accidentally deleted blocks—one misstep, and it's game over. Picross DS is still one of our favorite puzzle games on the system, and we can't wait to have our brains turned to mush by this tricky sequel. **—RANDY N.**

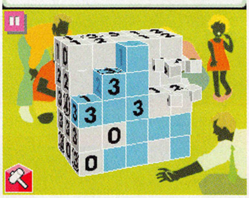


The hidden shape has been revealed!

Touch the icon on the top-right of the Touch Screen to continue.



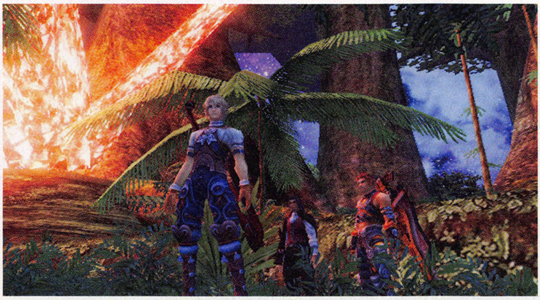




PUBLISHER: NINTENDO DEVELOPER: HAL LABORATORY RELEASE: TBD **DS**

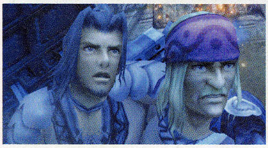
KEN IN 2010

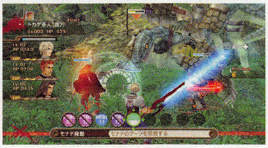
"IN THE YEAR 2010, THERE WILL BE BUGS—GIGANTIC, HIDEOUS BUGS!"



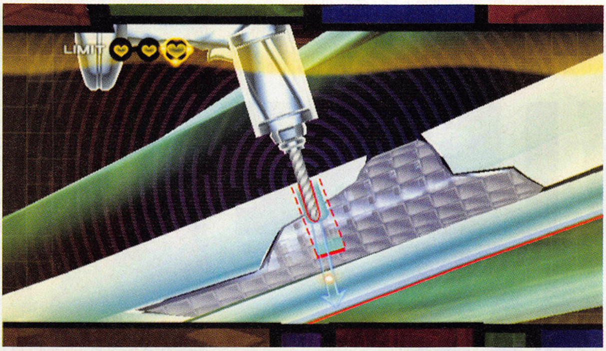
MONADO: BEGINNING OF THE WORLD

Monado: Beginning of the World had a low-key debut—its trailer was posted on Nintendo-run E3 websites without any official comments, and outside of an appearance on Nintendo's most recent release list (with a TBA date), no one has uttered a peep about it since. But for serious RPG fans, Monado just might be the most intriguing title on the Wii slate. The vast environments and the unique battle system look impressive, and Monolith Soft's RPG track record (notably the Xenosaga and Baten Kaitos series) is certainly nothing to sneeze at. **—CASEY L.**



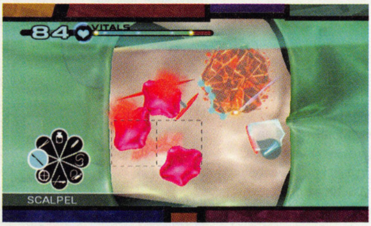


PUBLISHER: NINTENDO DEVELOPER: MONOLITH SOFT RELEASE: TBD **Wii**



Trauma Team

More than just a sequel to the groundbreaking Trauma Center games, Trauma Team lets you experience six distinct medical specialties featuring six types of gameplay through the eyes of six doctors. While the surgery and first-response aspects will be similar to what was in Trauma Center (and that's not a bad thing), the other medical disciplines will feel completely fresh. The endoscopy sections, for example, are played from a 3-D first-person perspective from within the patient. You'll hold down the A and B Buttons and move the Wii Remote controller forward and back to maneuver your microscopic camera through the patient's intestine (gross, huh?) while looking for and treating hemorrhages and ulcers. Orthopedic surgery, on the other hand, is performed from the usual external perspective, but it's all about precision, not fast reflexes. You'll have to carefully guide a drill into a patient's bone, cut synthetic bone fragments by tracing a guideline, hammer in pins by swinging the remote, and screw plates into place via a well-timed press and release of the A Button. Forensics is also totally different—it features some Phoenix Wright-style adventure aspects. There are more than 40 operations in total, along with new surgical tools, a manga-style story presentation, multiple difficulty settings, and improved onscreen cues so you'll know how to proceed. **—CHRIS H.**



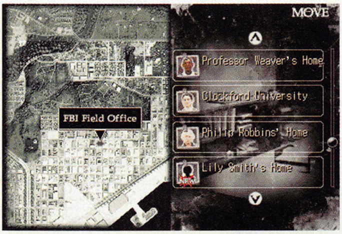
PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: ATLUS RELEASE: SPRING Wii

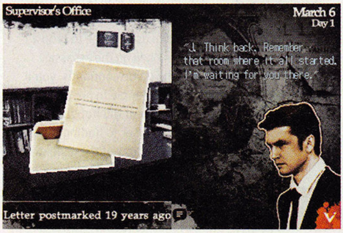
AGAIN

The makers of the cult detective-noir hit Hotel Dusk are exploring some weirder terrain in their next ambitious project, titled Again. The gritty point-and-click adventure game follows a psychic FBI agent who's investigating recent murders that suspiciously mirror a series of unsolved killings committed 19 years prior—murders that led to the disappearance of the protagonist's brother and left them both without parents.

Wading through lots of text gives the adventure a bookish vibe, and you'll even hold the DS on its side like an open tome. Slick and stylish character animations culled from chopped-up sequences filmed with live actors provides a great balance to the heavy wordage.

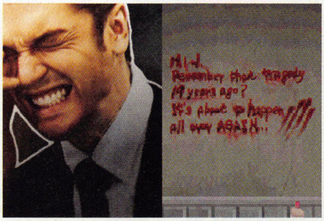
Your psychic mojo kicks in when walking around and exploring the latest murder settings in first-person 3-D. The present-day scene appears on the touch screen, while the exact same location as it was 19 years ago appears on the other screen. What's extremely cool is that you can roam around and explore both scenes simultaneously. Comparing the two scenes and interacting with the inconsistent elements you'll find between them leads you to clues you'll need to catch the murderer. Fans of Hotel Dusk and crime drama in general should definitely keep a close eye on this one. **—NATHAN M.**



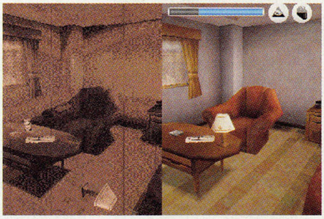


"J. Think back. Remember that room where it all started. I'm waiting for you there."

Letter postmarked 19 years ago



M.L.
Remember that tragedy
19 years ago?
It's about to happen
all over AGAIN...

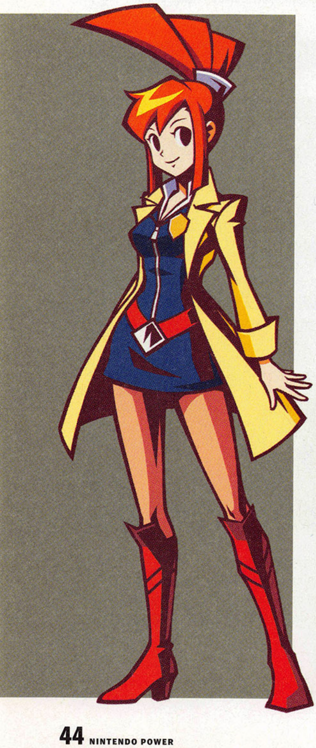


PUBLISHER: TECMO DEVELOPER: CING RELEASE: MARCH DS

Ghost Trick—the new DS game from the genius behind Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney—is unlike anything you've played before.

A NEW LEASE ON DEATH

MOST OF THE TIME when your character dies in a video game it means game over. In Capcom's Ghost Trick (working title), however, it's just the beginning. Sound strange and different? You betcha. But we'd expect no less out of the latest Nintendo DS game from Shu Takumi, the man who created and directed the first three Ace Attorney games.

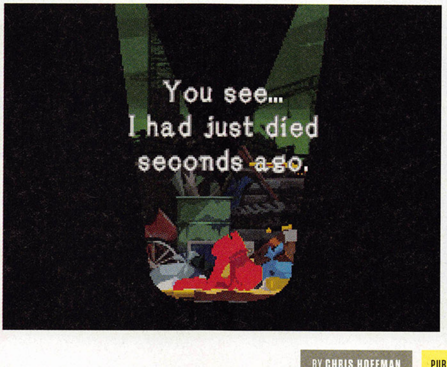


Ghost Trick casts you in the role of Sissel, who finds himself rather deceased when the game begins. You don't know who killed you, what circumstances led to your demise, or even who you were prior to death thanks to a severe case of amnesia, but you do know that your spirit temporarily lives on, and that you're going to use the time you have left—the hours remaining until dawn—to right wrongs and thus learn about the mysterious events surrounding your unfortunate fate.

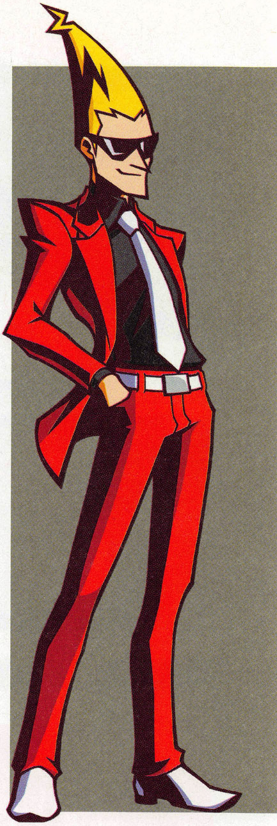
"The story in this game is centered on the main character, Sissel, who has lost not only his life, but his memory as well," states Takumi. "Thus, everything about him is unknown to the player as well as the character himself at the beginning of the game. This puts the player in the exact same situation as Sissel. Well, maybe not the *exact* same situation since the player isn't dead...."

As a ghost, Sissel can't interact with other people directly, but he can possess and manipulate inanimate objects within the vibrant 2-D environments. When the game begins, for example, you find yourself in a junkyard, where an assassin has a rookie detective named Lynne at gunpoint. To save her, you must move your soul into a nearby item (say, a guitar or a bicycle) to possess it, after which you can jump to another object or perform an action (such as strumming the guitar to distract the aforementioned assassin).

"I don't really want to spoil anything, so I won't go into details," comments Takumi, "but... players will be able to interact with over 100 different types of objects, ranging from everyday objects to the extraordinary. If you want an example...well, imagine something you use every day. If you can imagine it, you can probably possess it in this game."



You see...
I had just died
seconds ago.



Despite Sissel's best efforts, Lynne gets whacked, which is when Ghost Trick's other unique aspect—time travel—comes into play. When Sissel encounters a dead body, he can speak to the deceased person to gain info, then rewind time by four minutes so you can use your object-possession and -manipulation skills to prevent the person's death before time runs out. It'll require observation, logic, imagination, and efficient use of your time to save the would-be victim. In Lynne's case, your second chance allows you to reach and use a crane to drop a wrecking ball on the assassin.

As the game continues, you'll find more people in need of saving; rescuing them will hopefully bring you ever closer to finding the truth. "Are the victims of these deaths related to Sissel in some way, or are they complete strangers...?" Takumi queries. "As an amnesiac, Sissel has no idea. Therefore,

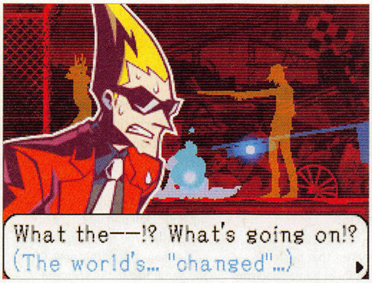
BY **CHRIS HOFFMAN**

PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM** RELEASE: **FALL** **DS** the only way for him to obtain clues about himself and solve the mysteries is to change those victims' fates and save their lives."

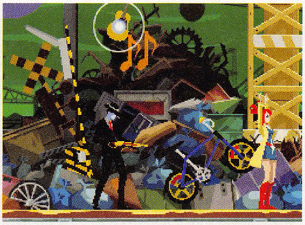
Takumi isn't saying anything specific about how the scenarios will play out, but players should expect a complex story, mysteries within mysteries, and a cast of around 30 unique characters to meet and interact with, all presented in a striking, unique visual style. Though the game is still a ways off—it won't hit until fall—we did get the chance to pick Takumi's brain a bit more about what went into the making of Ghost Trick and what players can expect to get out of it.

NINTENDO POWER **What inspired the creation of and the ideas behind Ghost Trick?**

SHU TAKUMI It was about five years ago, in 2004. We were wrapping up the development of Gyakuten Saiban 3 for Game Boy Advance [which was titled Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Trials and Tribulations when it was released in North America on the Nintendo DS handheld] and I felt that I had pretty much wrapped up Phoenix's story at the time, and that's when I started planning Ghost Trick. The idea behind this game was to create a totally new mystery game that was of a completely different style than the Ace Attorney series, and the first thing I thought about was the way the game would look.



What the—!? What's going on!?
(The world's... "changed"...)



[Above] Sissel attempts to make the assassin flee with his acoustic rendition of "Achy Breaky Heart."

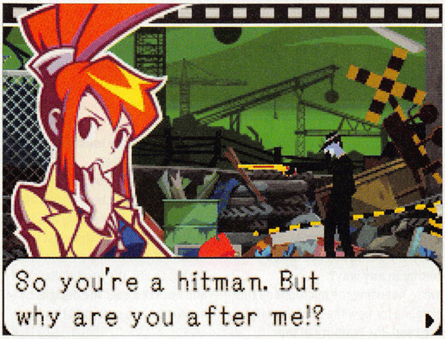
I knew that I wanted the new game to be visually different from the Ace Attorney games—different but interesting—and everything just flowed out from there. So I guess you can say that, in a way, the Ace Attorney games were the inspiration for Ghost Trick.

What is the connection between Sissel and Lynne?

Lynne is a rookie detective with a sense of justice and a strong sense of mission. The first death Sissel sees upon awakening as a "dead man" is Lynne's death. Because he's suffering from amnesia, he has no idea who she is, what she does, or even if they're acquaintances. He really remembers nothing. However, there is one thing he can be pretty sure of, and that is that Lynne witnessed the moment his life was stolen from him. What kind of connection do they have, if they have one at all? That is for you, the player, to discover!

What's the tone of the game? Is it a "dark" game?

"The main character is a ghost." "A lost life and lost memories." "The drama of a chase that's limited to just one night." With key concepts like these, I'd say that this story is dark and hard-boiled, but that's not all this game is about. It's like when you try to put the Ace Attorney series into key concepts. You can say that they're about "battling in the courtroom," "clients at the end of their ropes," and "a prosecutor so intent on winning that he'll use any method to do so," but those phrases don't convey everything about the Ace Attorney series.



So you're a hitman. But why are you after me!?

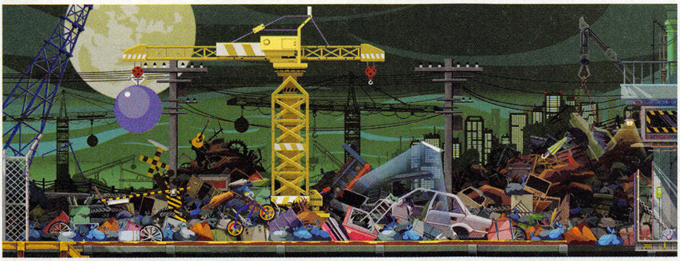
Why did you go with a 2-D side-view presentation for the game? What does that offer that other types of presentation don't?

It wasn't really a choice that needed to be made since I had a clear vision of what visual style I wanted from the start. Sissel is a spirit, and as such, is one step removed from the world he inhabits. I felt that the current visual style was best suited to getting across the feeling of watching the world from the outside, as well as just being a good way to present the story to the player in a dramatic fashion.

When it comes to games, I think that a 2-D presentation is a very intuitive way to convey a story. 3-D games have the advantage of being able to convey a sense of realism, but on the flip side, that means that it's hard to separate yourself from the game. Because that level of realism is not a necessary part of Ghost Trick, and because the concept of distance/separation has an important meaning for the game's system, I chose to make this game in 2-D.

How will the concept evolve to remain interesting in the game's later levels?

When designing this game, I thought to keep it as simple as possible. Games these days are often so complex and hard to play in terms of gameplay that I thought to make something that anyone



could pick up and play. This is actually the same concept behind the gameplay of the Ace Attorney series. For this reason, we've taken great care to adjust various aspects of the game to get the balance just right so that players will continue to find the game interesting without finding it hard to play.

The easiest aspect with which to illustrate my point is perhaps the story development. The idea behind Ghost Trick is to merge puzzle solving with the scenario. That is to say, it's not a game where the puzzles stand alone for the player to solve, but rather, the puzzles are integrated into the story and how the story develops. This means that as you solve the puzzles, you solve the mysteries embedded in the story itself and begin to see the truth, which may lead you to yet another mystery. I believe this kind of gameplay is something people have never seen before.

How are the dual screens used? Does the game use the microphone in any way?

We're not using the microphone this time. As for how the dual screens are used, the majority of the game will be played on the bottom screen, where players can directly control Sissel's spirit simply by touching and dragging it, and the top screen is used to show a variety of helpful information. Perhaps this is a bit orthodox, but I feel that since the style of this game is such that the player can do everything by simply interacting through the touch screen, this game was best suited to be on the Nintendo DS.

What's your main objective, as a creator, when devising the game's scenario?

My main objective when I write is to create scenarios that perfectly blend the medium of games and the art of storytelling together, which in turn can dictate the game's overall design. The themes of my scenarios are always centered around mysteries, foreshadowing, and of course, the final catharsis.

What's been the most fun about making this title?

I'd have to say it's being able to show each character's personality through their whole body and their movements, rather than just their upper halves. To bring those little details to life, the production staff and I worked over the designs by hand over and over, and I have to say that's a lot of fun. I think players will be pleasantly surprised by the extraordinary impact the characters will have on them.

Is there anything that's been particularly challenging about the creation of Ghost Trick thus far?

I don't think this applies to just making games, but problems both big and small pop up on a daily basis when you're trying to make something completely new. From the gameplay to the scenario, I have to think about so many different things every day that it's enough to drive a man to quit. "There's a problem in *this* spot?!" I often find myself thinking. There are so many details to take care of that the hardest part is definitely not having the time to see the whole picture all at once. However, thanks to that, whenever I see a bit of free time in my schedule, I feel a joy that can't be expressed in words, but I suppose that's part of the fun of making an original game.

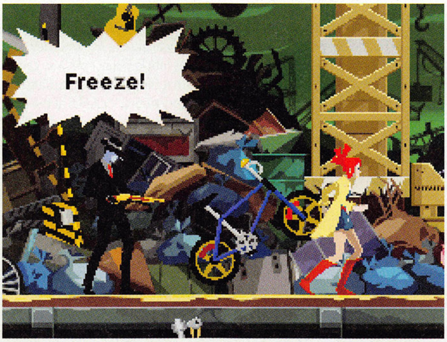
For the most part, this game seems pretty different from Ace Attorney. But do you see any similarities between that series and Ghost Trick?

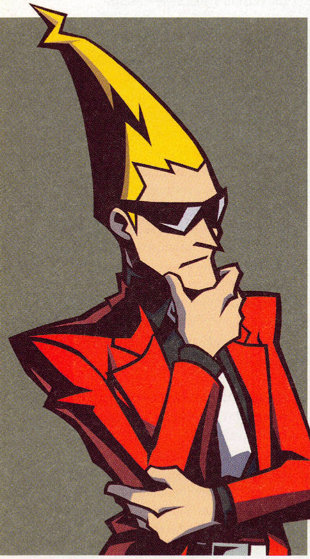
Well, I meant for them to be completely different in atmosphere, but they are both stories about solving riddles...so I suppose what they have in common is that they're both mysteries. The whole reason why I chose to work in the game industry is because I wanted to make mystery games, and as long as I can, I want to continue pursuing new, unique ways to surprise people and surpass their expectations.

By the way, we received quite a few comments from the people who tried the demo of Ghost Trick at Tokyo Game Show this year, and they seemed very happy that the game's scenario and characters have a sort of Ace Attorney flavor to them. So if you liked the Ace Attorney games, then I think you will definitely love Ghost Trick.

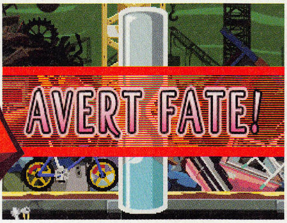
In Ace Attorney, Maya often provided help from the spirit world, and in Ghost Trick you're a spirit giving help. Is there something about this subject that appeals to you?

Actually, I don't have any real interest in the occult or in supernatural phenomenon, nor do I really know much about those types of things. But for a mystery game, a story that is told from the deceased's point of view combined with some solid gameplay sounded like an interesting and workable combination, so I decided to use some supernatural elements. Wait.... Don't tell me people are taking the inclusion of supernatural elements in my games to mean that I like the occult...? I'm actually scared of horror movies, so I never watch them, ever.





If we had to guess, we'd say that Sissel [left] was offed by the fashion police for sporting that crazy haircut.



Welcome... to the world of the dead.

ROAD 'HOG

Alongside a cast of classic characters, Sonic takes his legendary speed to the racetrack in Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing.

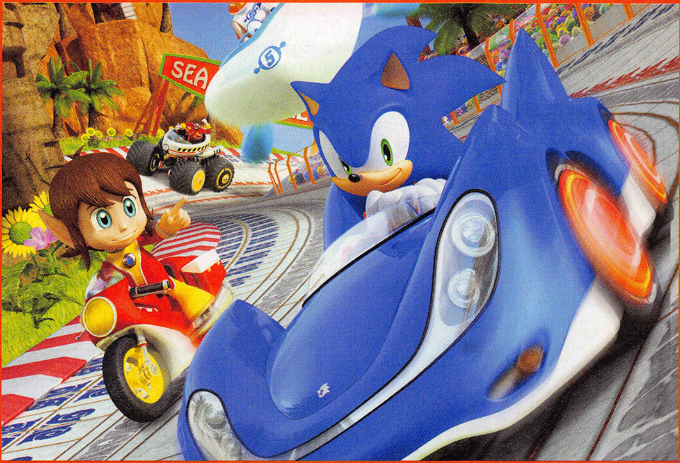
WE'RE NOT ENTIRELY sure why it's taken so long for Sega to make a kart-style racing game featuring its many memorable characters, but based on what we've played of Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing, we're just happy it's finally happening. Sure, it has some strong similarities to a certain Italian plumber's kart-racing games, but there are plenty of touches—be they presentation- or gameplay-related—to help set it apart.

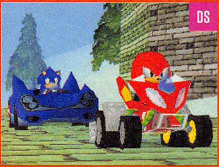
The Sonic series is heavily represented in the game, of course, but there are also characters from a diverse selection of Sega's games, including Billy Hatcher (from Sonic co-creator Yuji Naka's Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg for GameCube) and Ryo Hazuki (from the grand Dreamcast adventure Shenmue). The latter rides his motorcycle from Shenmue, which transforms into a forklift—one of the many in-jokes being added to put a smile on die-hard Sega fans' faces.

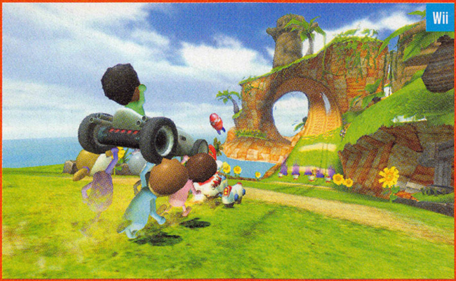
Developer Sumo Digital also made Sega Superstars Tennis, and is bringing that game's unique character abilities to this racer in the form of All-Star Moves. Those moves (which are picked up from capsules on the track, as are power-ups that flip the opponent's screen upside down, create a distracting rainbow, launch ricocheting boxing gloves, and more) make the character nigh unstoppable for a short period. One that we used belonged to Samba from Samba de Amigo—it made all of the cars on the track form a conga line that he gradually moved up.

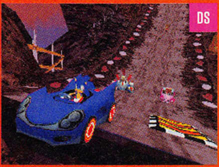
Tracks we've seen so far include a tribute to Sonic's Green Hill Zone, loaded with corkscrews; a Super Monkey Ball course that is full of 90-degree turns; a mansion from House of the Dead; and a couple of twisty, turny Billy Hatcher venues. Performing well on the tracks rewards you with Sega Miles, which you can spend to unlock more characters, tracks, and vehicles. The latter are broken down into classes, from race cars and bikes to off-road machines and hovercrafts.

Several controller setups will be supported, including Wii-Remote-and-Nunchuk or remote-only with the Wii Wheel accessory. Plus, the game will also have four-player local split-screen and eight-player online competition. —RANDY N.

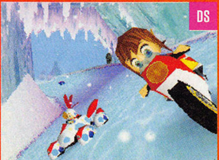


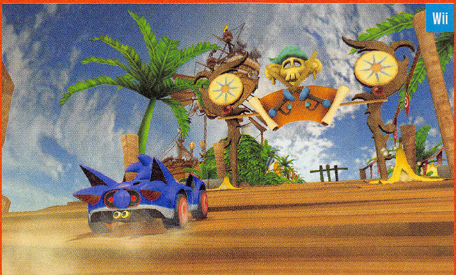






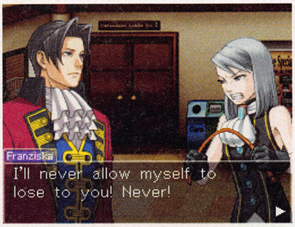
[Below] Seeing this makes us wish for a new Billy Hatcher game.



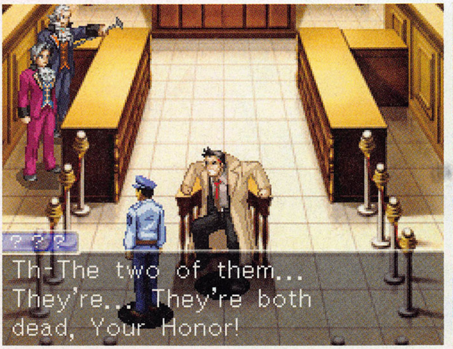


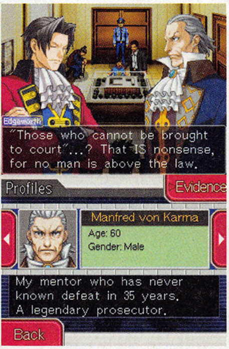
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **SUMO DIGITAL**
RELEASE: **FEBRUARY**
Wii DS

ACE ATTORNEY INVESTIGATIONS: MILES EDGEWORTH


Franziska
I'll never allow myself to lose to you! Never!

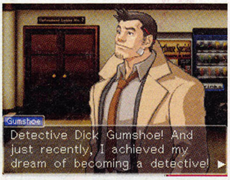
We've talked a lot about how the latest game in the Ace Attorney franchise focuses less on legal shenanigans and more on the crime-solving investigation efforts of prosecutor Miles Edgeworth, but that's not to say the game doesn't feature a return to the courtroom. The title's fourth chapter is a flashback, set at a time when young Miles Edgeworth is about to prosecute his first case. A double murder in the courthouse prevents that from happening, however, so it's up to Edgeworth and his sister figure, Franziska von Karma (who wields a whip even at the age of 13!), to find out what happened. Edgeworth's ruthless mentor Manfred von Karma and newly promoted detective Dick Gumshoe also feature prominently into the case, as do a host of all-new quirky characters. The blast-from-the-past setting doesn't alter the gameplay, though; you'll still talk to suspects, look for evidence, and use Edgeworth's logic to piece together clues. **—CHRIS H.**


???
Th-The two of them... They're... They're both dead, Your Honor!

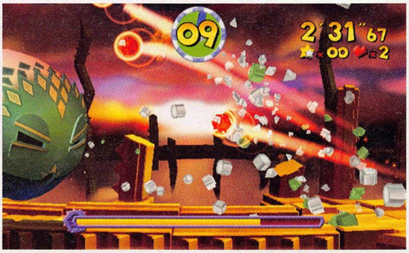

Edgeworth
"Those who cannot be brought to court"...? That IS nonsense, for no man is above the law.

Manfred von Karma
Age: 60
Gender: Male

My mentor who has never known defeat in 35 years. A legendary prosecutor.


Gumshoe
Detective Dick Gumshoe! And just recently, I achieved my dream of becoming a detective!

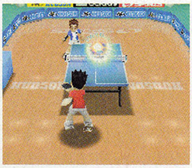
PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM**
RELEASE: **FEBRUARY**
DS

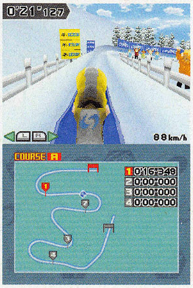


Span Smasher

This wacky block-breaker has you batting around an adorable piece of living fruit with the Wii Remote to smash through scrolling stages full of marvelous destructible objects and to squash boss monsters. It requires the Wii MotionPlus accessory to play, and we're excited to see how the controls shape up. **—NATHAN M.**

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** DEVELOPER: **ARTOON** RELEASE: **TBD**
Wii





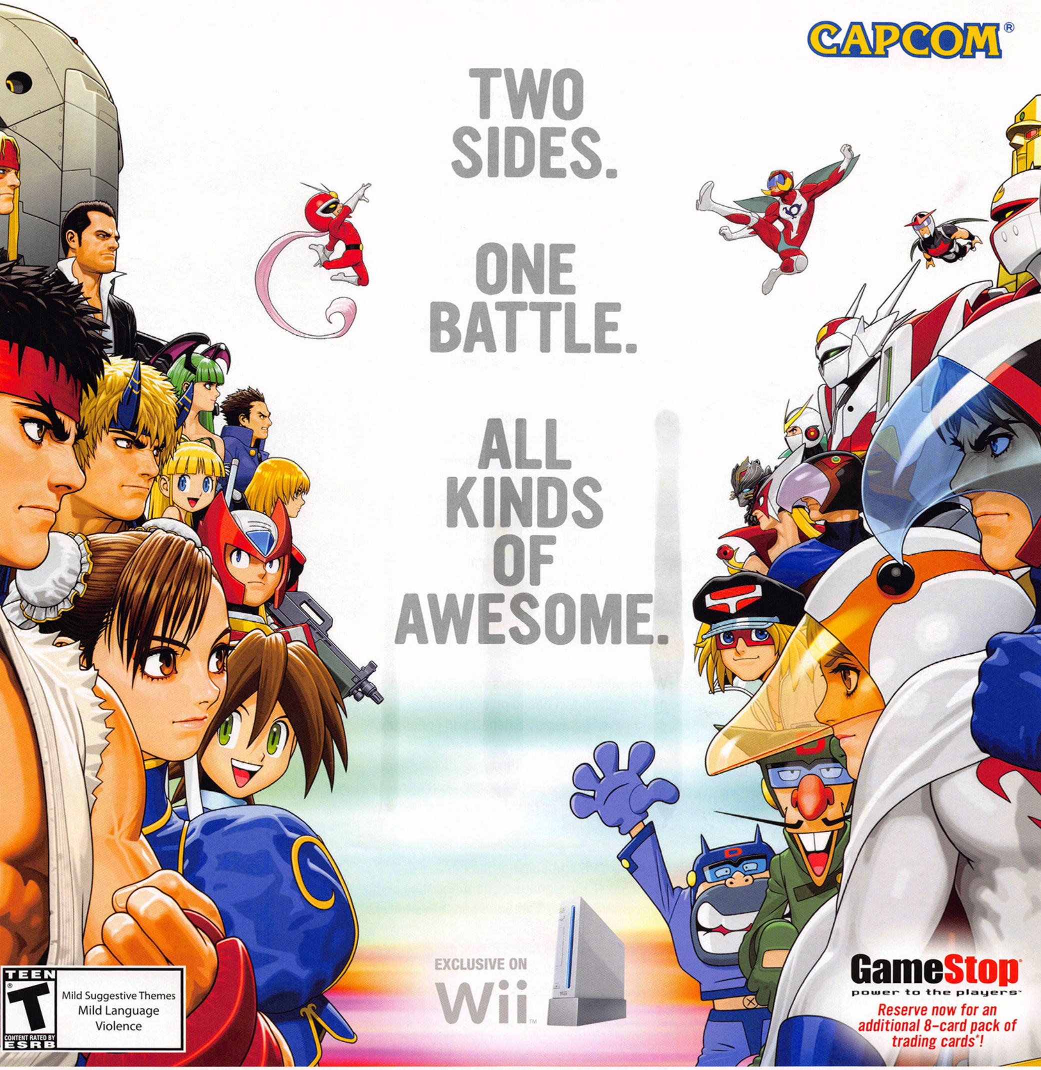
Deca Sports DS

Hudson's hit sports series makes the move to Nintendo DS this spring, but instead of duplicating the sports from the two Wii iterations, Deca Sports DS delivers 10 all-new events exclusive to the handheld. With single-card multiplayer and diverse sports ranging from golf and ping-pong to skydiving and cheerleading, Deca Sports DS should have something for just about everyone.

—ANDREW H.

PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: **HUDSON SOFT**
RELEASE: **MARCH**
DS

CAPCOM®


TWO SIDES.
ONE BATTLE.
ALL KINDS OF AWESOME.

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Mild Suggestive Themes
Mild Language
Violence

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gamespy Best of E3 2009 Fighting Game of Show

TATSUNOKO VS. CAPCOM™
ULTIMATE ALL-STARS

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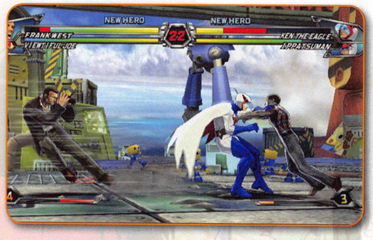
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH RYOTA NIITSUMA

Heading to North America on January 26, 2010 to take the Wii by storm is the newest installment in Capcom's flashy, anything-goes VS. fighting series. Tatsunoko VS. Capcom™: Ultimate All-Stars features online play, advancements in the famed VS. gameplay and more than 20 characters from classic Capcom titles and Tatsunoko anime, the Japanese animation studio that produced the famous Speed Racer and Robotech franchises. Capcom's team will include fan favorites like Ryu and Chun-Li from Street Fighter®, while the Tatsunoko roster will feature characters like Ken the Eagle from Gatchaman and Casshan from Neo-Human Casshan.

Ryota Niitsuma, producer of Tatsunoko VS. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars is a thirteen-year game industry veteran. We tracked him down for some Q and A on his Wii exclusive title.



Can you share some of your career highlights?

My first job in the industry was sales, and that experience inspired me to make games. I switched companies several times to get to where I am now, and became a producer about five to six years ago. I have worked as an assistant producer on Street Fighter IV and a producer on a fighting game that was only released in Japan. I've never been involved in a game that wasn't a fighter.

Capcom's VS. Series, particularly Marvel VS. Capcom 2, has been a fan-favorite title. Will fans of the VS. series be able to jump right into the game?

As Capcom's newest entry in the VS series, I paid special attention to deliver the over-the-top presentation and gameplay system that fans enjoyed in MvC2. You'll find lots of flashy moves and gameplay, and the basic system is a true successor to the series.

Capcom fighting games are known for their complex controller motions. How are these going to be implemented on the Wii?

We tried to make it easy for inexperienced gamers as well as skilled players. Unlike the Street Fighter series, players will only use four control buttons in Tatsunoko VS. Capcom: Light, Medium, Hard, and Partner buttons. The game supports the Wii Remote, Classic and GameCube controllers, as well as arcade-style joysticks. We've included much simpler command inputs compared to other Capcom titles, and for beginners we've implemented a system that allows complicated commands to be performed with only one button. I'm confident that everyone, including those who have never played a fighting game, can enjoy it.

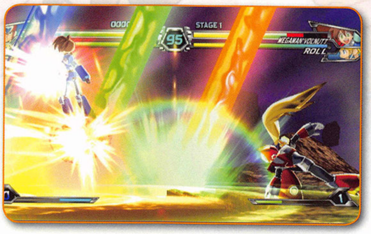
How did you decide which characters to include?

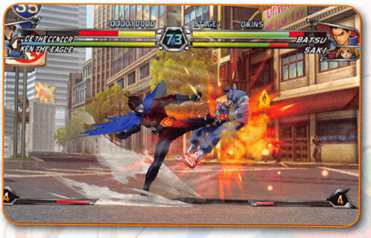
We listed all the characters we wanted and narrowed it down based on copyright, practicality, gameplay balance and popularity.

Can you briefly sum up the type of experience players will have with this game? Is it as crazy and over-the-top as the videos and screenshots suggest?

Tatsunoko VS. Capcom has succeeded at including all the signature characteristics of the Capcom VS. series. Everyone can throw lavish moves with a simple control. It has your favorite characters - true to their original designs - but takes the action full-screen. A wide range of players can enjoy the game.

The original Tatsunoko VS. Capcom was released in Japan during December 2008. Since this is a new game, what changes have you made to this game?





First of all, there are more characters. We've also taken feedback from the fans who have played the original Japanese version and adjusted the game balance. Now players can enjoy more competitive battles using any of the characters. Furthermore, we have implemented the Wi-Fi network system, which was the biggest request we received from the fans. With this new system, players can battle online against anyone from around the world.

Can you describe the online experience?

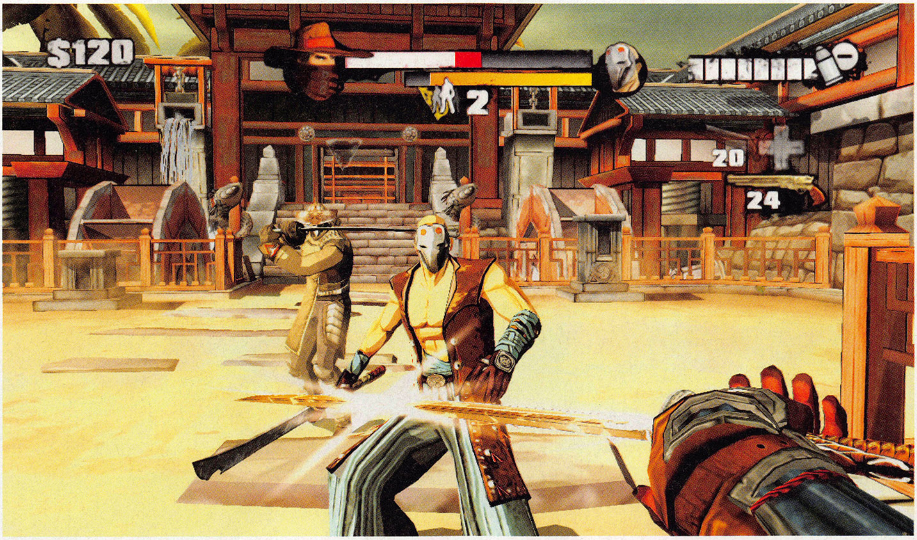
We've built the online experience to ensure it is fun for all skill levels, but also highly competitive, allowing strategic players to be the most successful. Each time you win a match, you will earn points to increase your rank and earn titles. Our system also indicates your fighting style, either offense-oriented or defense-oriented, to your opponents. This will help to enhance the excitement of trying to anticipate your opponent's moves.

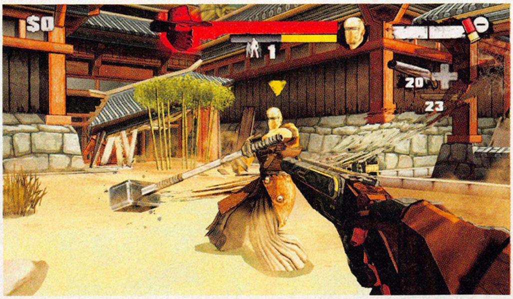
Nintendo DSi XL

The next iteration of Nintendo's world-conquering handheld will hit stores sometime in the first quarter with its significantly larger 4.2" screens. There's no word yet on if the system will come with a bigger touch pen or pre-loaded software as it does in Japan, but we'll keep you posted. **—CHRIS SL.**

KEN IN 2010

"IN THE YEAR 2010, ENGINEERS WILL STILL NOT HAVE THOUGHT TO ADD GUARDRAILS TO THEIR HOVERING PLATFORMS, RESULTING IN SEVERAL AVOIDABLE DEATHS."

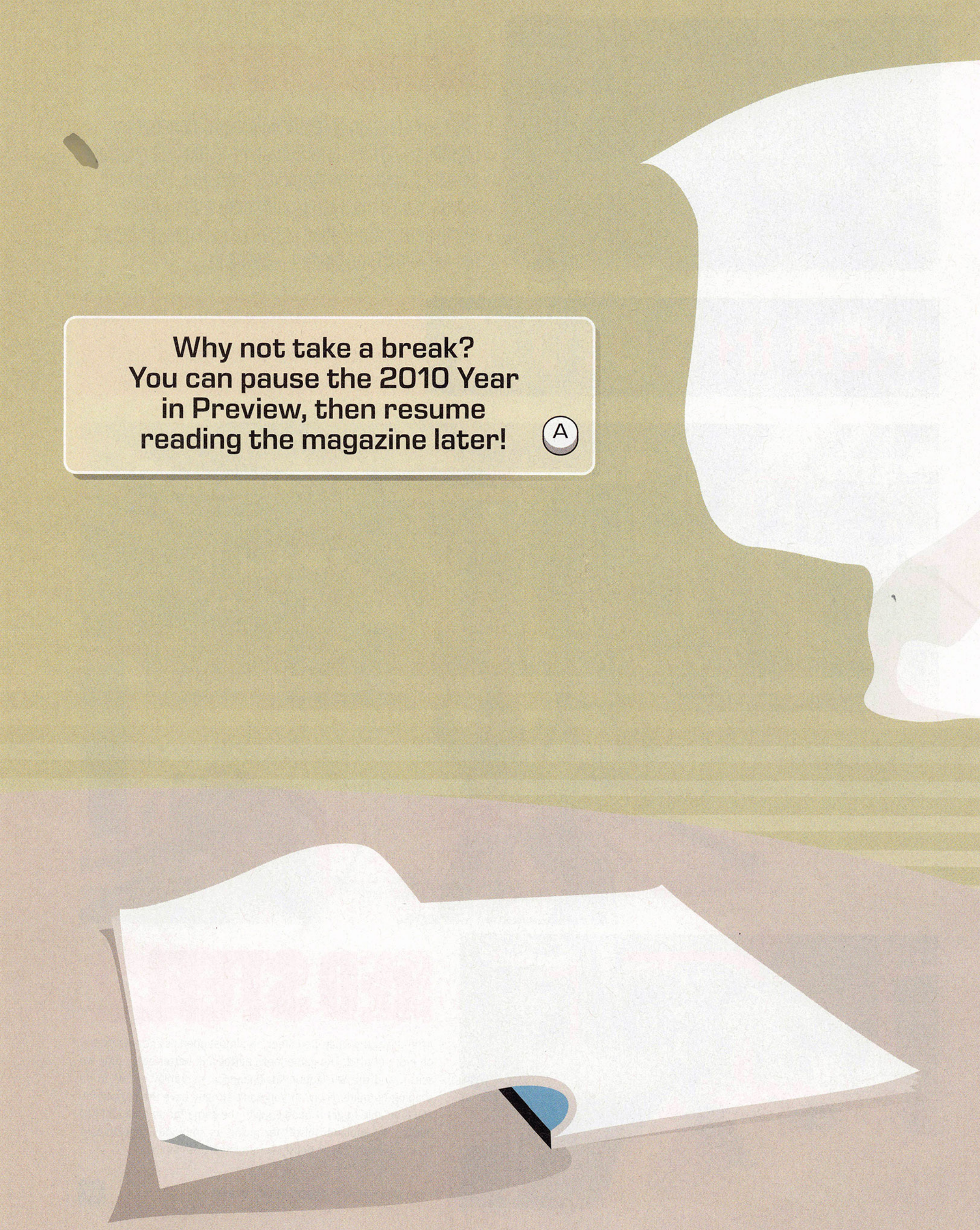




RED STEEL 2

After a lengthy delay, Red Steel 2 is almost upon us and we couldn't be more excited. The game looks better and better every time we see it, and the Wii MotionPlus-enhanced swordplay seems to be shaping up quite nicely. (If you don't already have the peripheral, you'll be able to get it bundled with the game for an additional 10 bucks.) We applaud Ubisoft for giving its ambitious development team the extra time to polish everything up. **—STEVE T.**

PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT** RELEASE: **MARCH** Wii

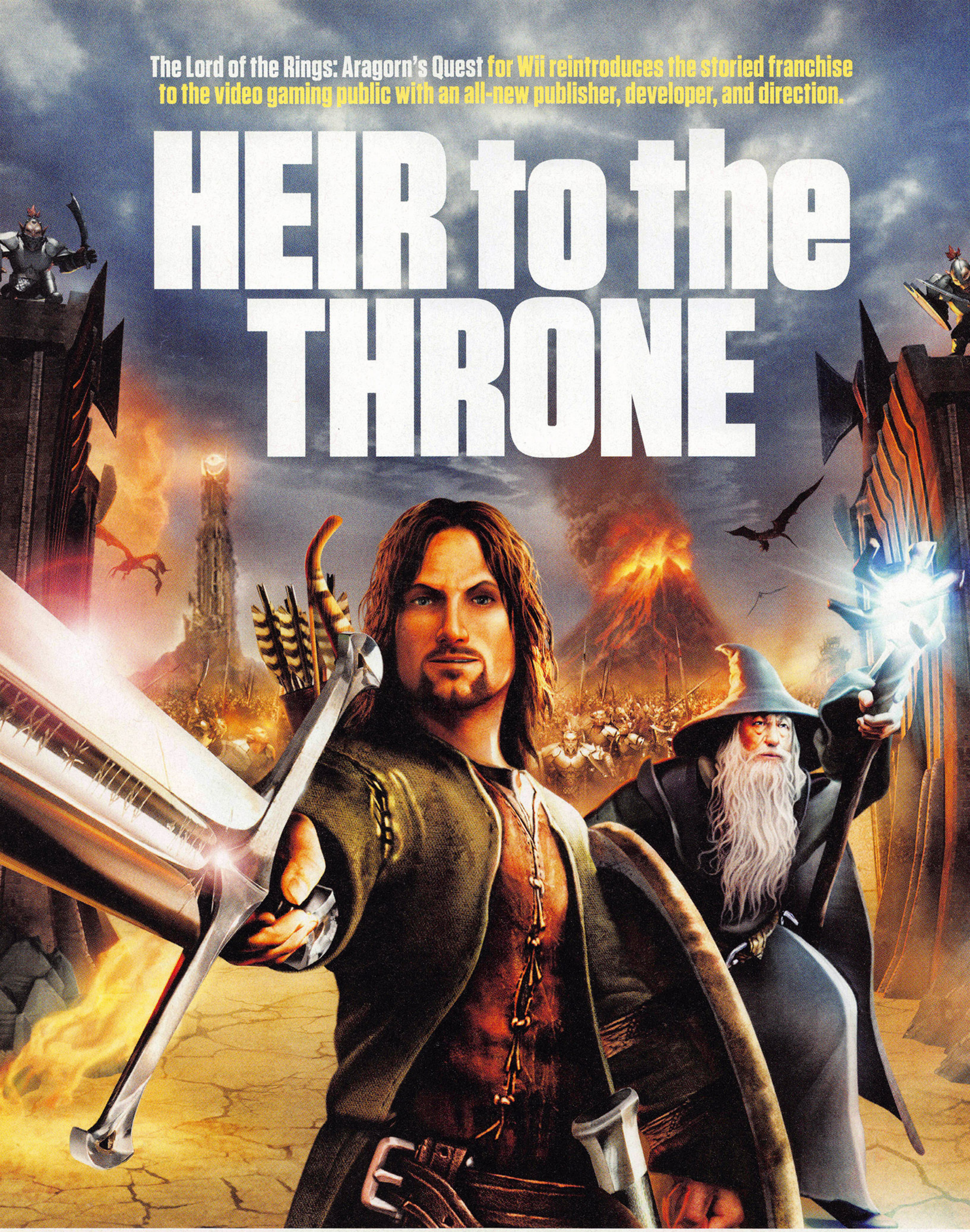


Why not take a break?
You can pause the 2010 Year in Preview, then resume reading the magazine later! Ⓐ

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest for Wii reintroduces the storied franchise to the video gaming public with an all-new publisher, developer, and direction.

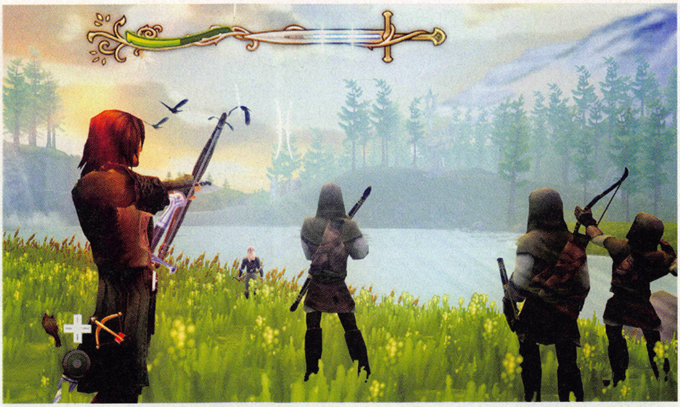
HEIR to the THRONE



BY JUSTIN CHENG

PUBLISHER: **WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE** DEVELOPER: **HEADSTRONG GAMES** RELEASE: **SPRING** Wii

IT MAY BE hard to believe, but it's been nearly a decade since *The Lord of the Rings* was on the silver screen. In that time, there have been numerous video games based on the series—the most notable of which were adaptations of the films. But the video game rights to *The Lord of the Rings* have changed hands since, allowing for a new and different take on the fantasy franchise.



The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest presents the events of *The Lord of the Rings* through the eyes of Samwise Gamgee (voiced by the film trilogy's actor Sean Astin). But there are several reasons why the game isn't titled Samwise's Quest. See, in the post-War of the Ring era, Hobbiton mayor Samwise is reading the *Red Book of Westmarch* to his children, telling the story of Aragorn, the King of Gondor, who is visiting the Shire to give Sam the Star of the Dúnedain. (The developers tell us this is based on something found in the appendices of one of author J.R.R. Tolkien's books.) Besides, Tancred Dyke-Wells, the creative director at developer Headstrong Games, explains: "Aragorn is the most noble, archetypal hero of the story.... He is a fighter, stoical and hardened—but he is compassionate, his loyalty to his friends is unbending, and he shows an unlimited capacity for self-sacrifice. When things are at their worst, it's Aragorn who can inspire and rally everyone—and somehow turn dark to light. He's the guy you want to be!" And in more practical terms, Aragorn's the guy who participates in a lot of battles, which makes him a good subject for an action-packed adventure.

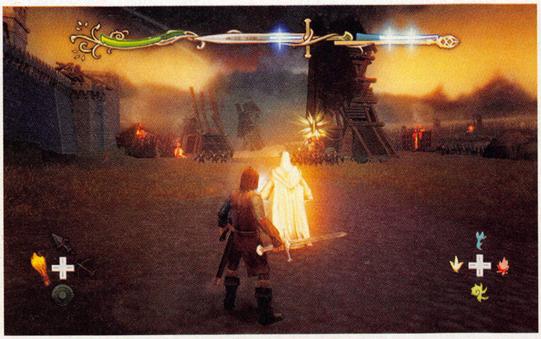
"LET'S HUNT SOME ORC"

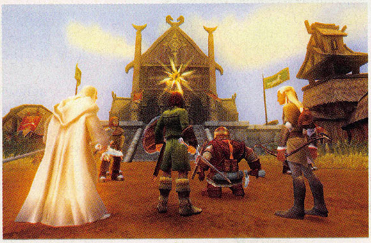
And there's action aplenty in this title, as you journey through the selected highlights of *The Lord of the Rings*. (Thanks for skipping the slower parts, Sam!) After Frodo is taken to Rivendell, for example, Aragorn escorts the other Hobbits to the elven city, when he sees Boromir being attacked by goblins. To assist your fellow Gondorian, you swing the Wii Remote controller like a sword (you can also charge up your sword for a more powerful attack by tapping B) and hold Z to lock onto a target and block. You can break through an enemy's defenses by shaking the Nunchuk to bash your opponent with your shield. Naturally, Aragorn's an adept archer, so you press the appropriate direction on the Control Pad to equip his bow, then hold B to paint your target, and release it to unleash your arrows. If you need to get a better line of sight on your adversaries, you can hold C to enter a first-person view.

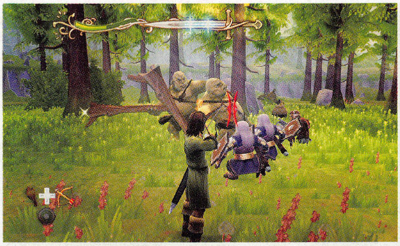
After rescuing Boromir, you continue your journey to Rivendell by hiking across plains and through forests. Along the way, you might find all manner of collectibles, including gold and silver coins for purchasing new armor and weapons, and character tokens with which you can upgrade the abilities of your allies. No, despite being the only character named in the title, Aragorn does not fight alone. Both Legolas and Gimli (voiced by John Rhys-Davies as in the films) will fight by your side, as will Gondorian soldiers (during the battle at Helm's Deep, for instance). Although you don't control your allies' actions, you can strengthen them by using skills such as Rally Cry (by holding A and shaking the Nunchuk controller).

Your most useful ally by far, however, is Gandalf. At any time, a second player can press the + Button on another Wii Remote and enter the fray as the great wizard. Gandalf controls similarly to Aragorn, except

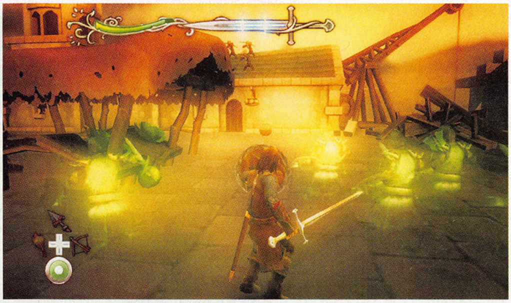
Aragorn may be one tough dude, but it never hurts to have some backup.

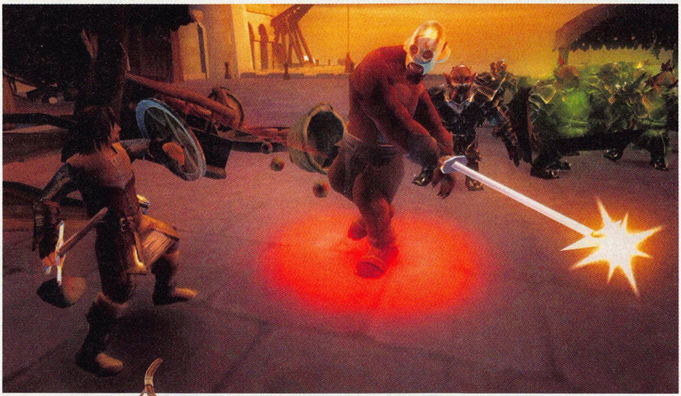






[Below] Breaking through some of the larger enemies' defenses might require you to match an onscreen gesture prompt.





he has healing and lightning spells in his arsenal. "[Gandalf's] magical abilities are the perfect complement to Aragorn's physical skills as a Ranger and a fighter," Dyke-Wells states. Of course, Gandalf wasn't fighting alongside Aragorn all the time in the books/movies, but Dyke-Wells explains, "Sam's poetic license allows us to enhance the user's gameplay experience with 'embellishments' to the tale!"

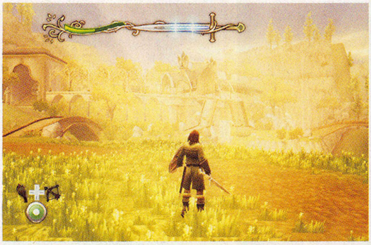
Other noncanonical elements include the various side quests, such as finding and destroying some spider nests. You might get lost searching for these diversions and the numerous aforementioned collectibles, but it's easy to get back on track: just stand still and hold A, and a glowing golden path to your goal will appear.

"HOME IS BEHIND, THE WORLD AHEAD"

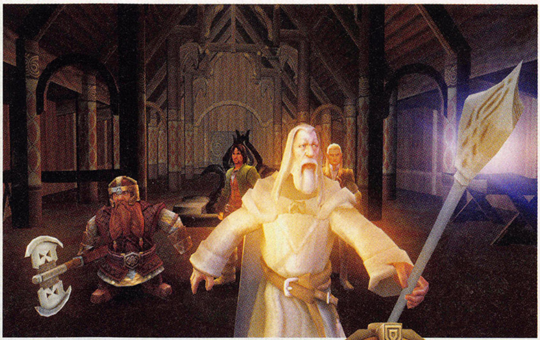
In order to create their version of Middle-earth, the developers refined and enhanced their existing Battalion Wars 2 engine, Dyke-Wells says, allowing them to "deliver open-world landscapes and battles populated with hundreds of characters" and add "a whole host of visual goodies such as depth of field and motion blur." This technology also gives Headstrong the opportunity to expand upon the world, letting you venture through areas of Middle-earth that may have been touched upon only briefly in prior *The Lord of the Rings* games. "For example, we travel from the town of Bree all the way to Weathertop and the Trollshaws beyond," says the creative director, "and we expanded the surrounding area of Rivendell so that the player can journey uninterrupted from the Ford of Bruinen all the way to the foothills of the Misty Mountains, and explore all the nooks and crannies of Rivendell itself." Fortunately, you don't have to sprint everywhere (by holding A); you can travel faster by horse. The horse-riding controls are as simple as the on-foot ones: you mount and dismount by tapping A, steer the horse with the Control Stick, and slash with your sword by swinging the Wii Remote. And fighting on horseback makes dispatching Orcs and Uruk-hai a snap when riding through places such as the Pelennor Fields.

RETURN OF THE KING

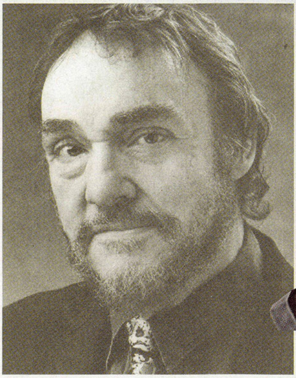
This isn't the first time we've seen Aragorn's Quest: it was first unveiled last May, and we saw it in action at 2009's E3. However, a lot has changed since then—and not just the graphics—as Headstrong Games creative director Tancred Dyke-Wells tells us: "We listened [to people's feedback at E3], and we added a lot of feature development in that extra time. To give a few examples, we added a sprint feature to help get around those big landscapes. We integrated the bow seamlessly into melee combat so the player can switch to that weapon and use it on the move, in third person, rather than in a static first-person mode only." In addition, co-op play has been greatly improved: Gandalf is now fully controllable and has been given some RPG-style upgrades. Exploration has been made easier, too: "We made navigational aids clearer and less intrusive; we developed tracking gameplay in which Aragorn can spy out and follow trails.... [There's a] lot of new content."



Given all of these details, along with its pick-up-and-play controls, The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest seems to have all of the pieces to make it appeal to *The Lord of the Rings* fans young and old. We'll find out for sure when Aragorn's Quest is released this spring.



Like the cartoony Battalion Wars 2, Aragorn's Quest has a stylized look.



INTERVIEW

THERE AND BACK AGAIN

Due in part to his indelible performances in the *Indiana Jones* series and, of course, in *The Lord of the Rings* films, John Rhys-Davies is one of our favorite actors working today. We had the privilege of chatting with the movie veteran about giving Gimli his voice, the differences between film and games, and the intelligence of *The Lord of the Rings* fans.

NINTENDO POWER What's it been like to return to the Gimli character after all this time?

JOHN RHYS-DAVIES When you create a character out of love, like Gimli, and you live with it and associate with it, it really is a sort of permanent part of your psyche, and you can access it very easily. It's nice to be able to pull it out like a party piece from time to time and explore it again—this time for fairly young viewers. I've met some children who have seen *The Lord of the Rings*, really at an age that I wouldn't have thought was suitable to see *The Lord of the Rings*. *The Lord of the Rings* can be very scary. But Aragorn's Quest, I think, is really more designed...as an introduction to that whole *The Lord of the Rings* universe, if you like.... It has the sense of wonder and sense of miraculousness as one encounters, I suppose, *The Hobbit* for the first time or *Lord of the Rings* itself.

I [found] that the *Lord of the Rings* audience was just about the smartest audience of any film that I ever saw. It set me wondering why. And then I realized that most people who have seen the film had read the book. And if they hadn't read the book, they went away afterwards and read the book. And they became the real fans of the film. And anyone who can get through that big damn book is, by definition, smart.

So I'm sort of hoping in my own parent's sort of way that there will be progression for youngsters with this one [Aragorn's Quest], from the game to the book itself. From the computer to actual literature. If that's the case, it will be unusually beneficial for a game.

How does acting for a video game differ from acting on a film?

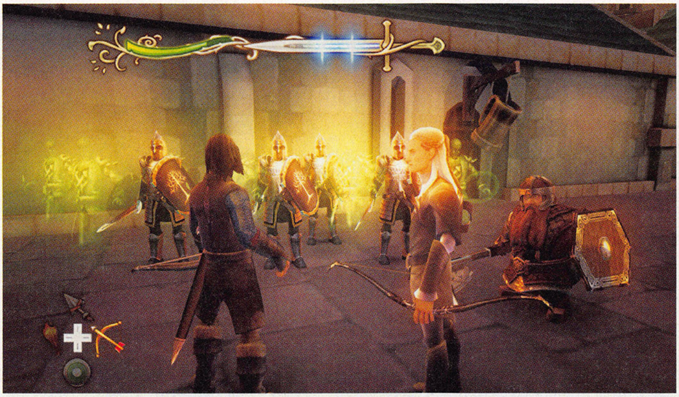
For the actor, it's different in the sense that you're there to supply narrative, to encourage, to cajole, to warn, to reward. And that's really just an extension of the basic character. It's pretty undemanding in terms of intellectual or emotional effort.... Technically, the only real challenge, I suppose, is in keeping the energy and the variety and the enthusiasm of a character in there so that it really does help the player or the listener. And if you do it right, it can amuse and entertain at the same time.

How did you originally come up with the voice for Gimli? How would you characterize it?

In the early days of preparing to film *The Lord of the Rings*, we had a number of group discussions. Peter [Jackson, the films' director] basically said, "Look, we have a dialect coach here, and I want some regional British dialects."... He said, "Tolkien wrote this as a pre-Arthurian myth of Britain, in which all the elements were there of the British of his time—the Scots, the Irish, the Welsh."... Tolkien himself certainly thought of the sound of Elvish as being [a] very Welsh sort of sound....

So we knew that Elvish had to sound Welsh. We knew that the Shires had to sound like...I suppose, Bristol, West Country. We knew that Aragorn could be sort of more standard-received English with its derivations, which is a sort of Elizabethan-American sound.... Gimli's was left really with the choice of Irish or Scottish. And I discussed it with Peter and I figured that we were

"Anyone who can get through that big damn book is, by definition, smart."



“[Gimli’s] not a funny man, but the comedy [comes] from the fact that he doesn’t realize he’s small.”

seeing far too many loveable Irish characters in film lately, and that laid-back Irish quality was not right for Gimli. Gimli is hugely impatient.... Some would say [in Gimli’s voice] he has anger management issues. There’s an aggressiveness about Gimli, an instant response to insult, that I thought was more appropriate for certain inner-city behavior in Scotland than anywhere else. And then we modified that because the Scottish accent itself can be...well, there are many Scottish accents, obviously. Edinburgh is very refined, and that is not really right for our Gimli [said with Edinburgh accent]. It was more Glasgow like that, but you know, if you get really deep Glasgow, nobody can understand a thing [said with Glasgow accent]. So it had to be modified, but it had to have that energy and that aggressiveness, and that is why I chose Scottish....

These things have to be considered. You know, nobody believed that a successful film could be made of *The Lord of the Rings*. Saying that now sounds so ridiculous, doesn’t it? But at the time, no one...*I* didn’t believe it could be done. Tolkien himself didn’t believe that you could make a film of *The Lord of the Rings*. That’s why he sold the film rights originally for peanuts because he thought, “No one can do it. You can buy the rights if you like, but you can’t make a film out of this.” And it is the genius of Jackson that...he and the writers put it together in an extraordinary way. Because it isn’t a straightforward, linear tale. It’s not a question of dark and light and dark and light. It’s a question of dark and darker and darker and darker and darker. One of the ways that we tried to bring some light into it was injecting a sort of energetic humor and comedy through Gimli, who becomes the lightning rod for events.... He’s not a funny man, but the comedy [comes] from the fact that he doesn’t realize that he’s small. As far as he’s concerned, he’s pretty standard and a straight up-and-down hero. He doesn’t get the comedy. He doesn’t get that there’s something incongruous about himself of being a hero of battle when he’s only higher than the Hobbits. He’s not exactly a giant like Strider.

What do you think of video games as a storytelling medium?

Well, structurally, they are different from a story, aren’t they? They explore different possibilities. It [has] a Tree of Life-type structure where you come to a branch and you either go up that way or that way. I think in a way, a good game actually is hugely constructive. It tells you and prepares you for the fact that life really is a multiple-choice thing. You can get those choices wrong, and if you do, the consequences are pretty dire. I don’t think it prepares you for the fact that actually you can’t go back on some of those choices, that once made, you’re stuck with them. But drama is a different thing, I think. I guess the shape of a story being fixed in fiction has its pluses and its minuses. I suppose the ideal game would be one where you found the true narrative line for yourself. When we read a great novel when we’re young, we see all those wonderful characters around us. [We identify] with the hero, and the hero’s ups and the hero’s downs are our ups and downs. I suppose gaming itself is a movement towards the perfect expression and discovery of the ideal narrative. I think it’s fascinating.

“WHAT HAS IT GOT IN ITS POCKETSES?”

Don’t fret, handheld gamers—The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn’s Quest is on its way to the Nintendo DS. Similar to its big brother, the TT Fusion-developed Nintendo DS version presents the highlights (read: battles) of *The Lord of the Rings*. Unlike the Wii version, however, it’s a single-player action-RPG. With a heavier emphasis on the RPG elements, Aragorn’s Quest for DS features upgradeable weapons and armor, as well as unlockable abilities.

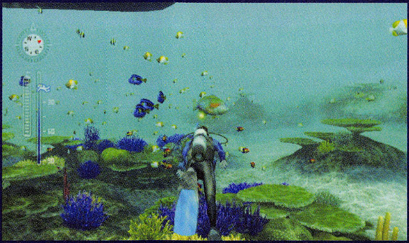
DEEPER WATERS

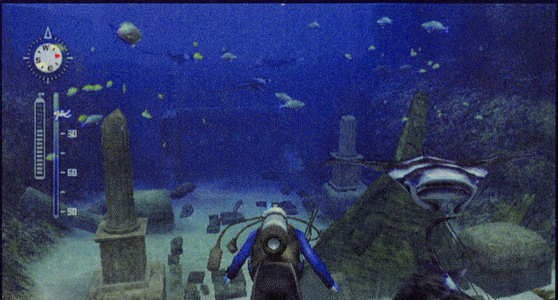
Feed fish, fight sharks, and solve an undersea mystery in Endless Ocean: Blue World.

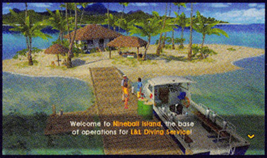
FOLLOWING IN THE flipper-adorned footsteps of its predecessor, Endless Ocean: Blue World lets players embark on another soothing adventure under the sea. Like in the first Endless Ocean, you'll use simple Wii Remote controls (you point in the direction you want to go and press B to swim) to explore beautiful environments such as coral reefs and deep-sea trenches while interacting with all manner of sea creatures, from fish to turtles to stingrays to whales. And beautiful it truly is—the game boasts some of the most detailed creature models on the Wii console, and the lighting effects are simply fantastic. As you roam beneath the waves, you'll get to use tools such as a camera, a radarlike device called a multisensor (useful for finding buried treasure), and an item called a pulsar (an electromagnetic tool used for healing injured animals). But not everything is calm and peaceful; you'll occasionally use the pulsar to defend yourself from attacking sharks.

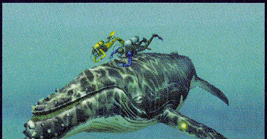
The entire game isn't underwater, either. You'll get to walk around on land at your island HQ, where you'll be able to change gear (wetsuits, flippers, gloves, etc.), acquire new items from a local trader, read up on all the creatures you encounter, and play with dolphins at the pier. Though there's plenty to do both in and out of the water, your ultimate goal is to unravel a mystery about a sunken castle by using clues that your employer's late son left behind. And if that's not enough aquatic adventuring for you, you can visit a friend's island via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection. —**CHRIS H.**

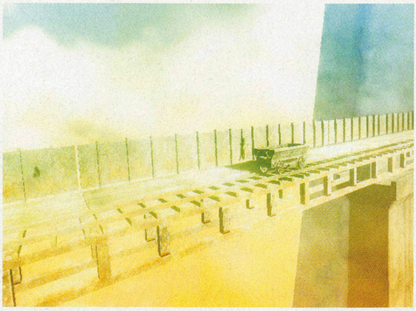
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** DEVELOPER: **ARIKA**
RELEASE: **FEBRUARY**
Wii





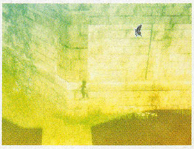

Welcome to Nineball Island, the base of operations for L&L Diving Service!





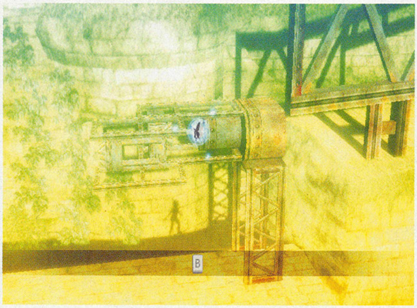
LOST IN SHADOW

Hudson's weird and wonderful-looking Lost in Shadow is already in contention for our "Best Game with a Lead Character You Can't See" award (well, if we had such a thing, it would be). That's right—you don't actually see your character in this eye-popping side-scrolling platformer. You see just his shadow.



The platforms, pitfalls, obstacles, and enemies aren't what you see in the foreground; rather, you navigate the level that's created by all of these things' shadows in the background. It's a tough concept to grasp at first, even when seeing it in motion.

To make things even more interesting, there's a sidekick "sylph" character named Spangle that aids the protagonist's shadow by changing the direction of light at the player's command, thus changing the level itself. Seemingly impassible barriers vanish and platforms become closer together—the potential for some really brain-bending puzzles is high. **—RANDY N.**

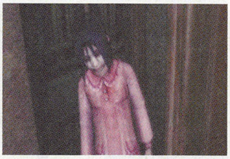


PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: HUDSON RELEASE: SUMMER Wii

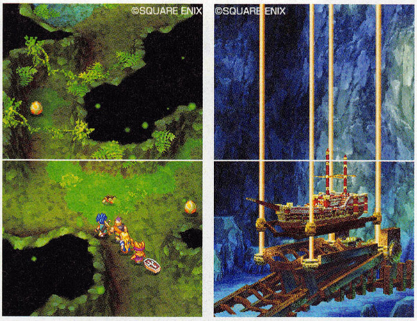
CALLING

The videotape in *The Ring* was pretty simple by comparison. All it did was kill people. Hudson's new horror story Calling has a similar but more complicated idea: a "Black Page" that leaves whoever reads it...well, let's say *not quite alive*.

What results is a spooky first-person adventure, a little bit of Geist meeting a touch of Hotel Dusk. Stuck between here and the hereafter, you'll use the Wii Remote to interact with whatever bits of the living world you can. With some smart lateral thinking, that might be enough to find a way back from the afterlife. **—DAVID S.**



PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: HUDSON RELEASE: SPRING Wii



Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Reverie

After the well-received DS remakes of Dragon Quest IV in 2008 and V in 2009, 2010 should bring the final chapter of the series's Zenithia trilogy—Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Reverie. This installment stars a party of amnesiac heroes who are torn between reality and its mysterious dreamlike mirror world. Originally released in Japan in 1995, Dragon Quest VI brought to the series a renewed focus on combat, a higher level of challenge, and the return of the character-class system introduced in Dragon Quest III. **—CASEY L.**

PUBLISHER: SQUARE ENIX DEVELOPER: ARMOR PROJECT/ARTEPIAZZA RELEASE: TBD DS

KEN IN 2010

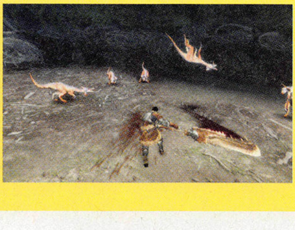
"IN THE YEAR 2010, MEDICINE WILL EITHER KEEP YOU HEALTHY OR CAUSE YOU TO MUTATE INTO A MINDLESS ABOMINATION, DEPENDING ON THE DOSAGE. BE SURE TO READ THE LABELS."

What's that smell?
TOP 7
talk radar
? OF THE WEEK
TOP 7 EVERY MONDAY
Originality
games radar
WHAT'S THAT SMELL? ORIGINALITY
FRESH GAMING CULTURE
STRONGEST BOREDOM-FIGHTING FEATURES ANYWHERE • MOST WIN PER CAPFUL OF ANY GAME SITE • BRILLIANCE AND MADNESS IN EVERY PODCAST • GETS SCREENSHOTS BRIGHTER • SPECIALLY BLENDED VIDEOS • LEAVES BRAIN SOFT AND REFRESHED
gamesradar.com

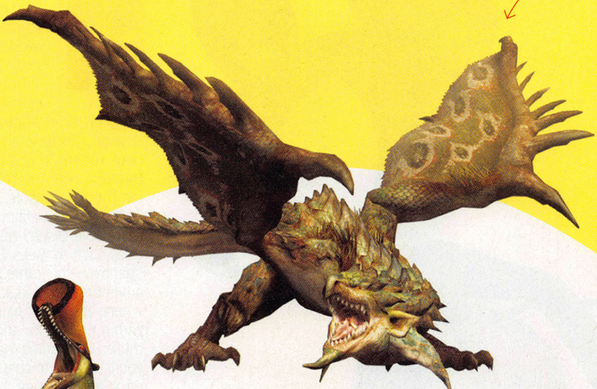
THE BIGGER THEY ARE, THE HARDER THEY BITE

Sink your teeth into Monster Hunter Tri...before its gargantuan beasts sink their teeth into you!

If you've been reading our coverage of Monster Hunter Tri for the last few issues, then you probably already know what the game is about: teaming up with allies (either your friends via split screen or online, or a CPU-controlled partner), accepting quests, and slaying any number of giant, dinosaurlike monsters. The strategies run deep and the customization runs deeper; you can select from numerous weapon types (swords, a hammer, bowguns, and more), and by collecting items from the environments and from fallen enemies, you can craft your own armor—there is an almost limitless number of combinations. But perhaps the most exciting part of Monster Hunter Tri is the vast variety of nasty creatures you'll face. Some hide underground, some can fly, and others live in the sea (Monster Hunter Tri marks the first time in the series you can go underwater), but all of them want to feast on your battered remains. We recently had a chance to talk to the game's producer, Ryozo Tsujimoto, to get his opinion on which monsters are the coolest (and why). **—CHRIS H.**

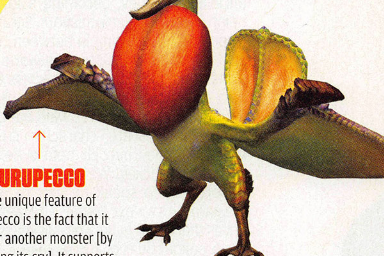


Producer Ryozo Tsujimoto



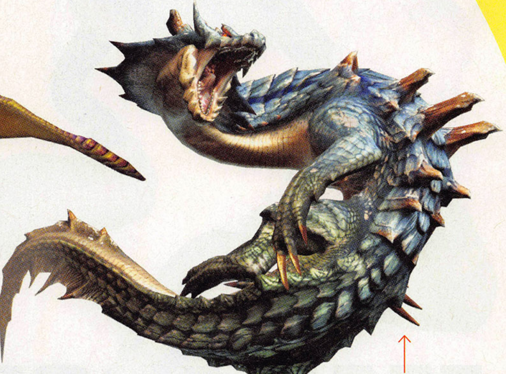
RATHIAN

"This monster has been in the series since the first Monster Hunter game, but we've added a lot of different actions and attacks. So the fans can feel very familiar with the creature, but also at the same time they can feel the freshness of a new monster. If you try to fight the monster in the same way as [in] the previous version, you're going to have a hard time in battle, because its motions are completely different."



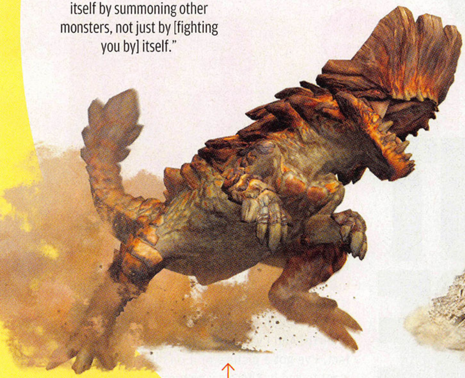
CURUPECCO

"The unique feature of Curupecco is the fact that it calls for another monster [by mimicking its cry]. It supports itself by summoning other monsters, not just by [fighting you by] itself."



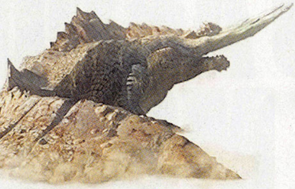
LAGIACRUS

"This monster lives in the water, generally; there's totally new control and ways of hunting this monster. But this monster also comes out on land, so there is a different dimension to how to hunt [it] down. It could be a challenge once it's underwater; it'll probably be more familiar for the players if the monster's on land."



BARROTH

"This monster is the first challenge that players will face if they play in single-player mode. Although it's a big challenge, the way the monster attacks is very linear and very simple. It is a challenge, but it's also an opportunity for the player to learn how to evade and then attack, and incorporate those two actions together to learn to become a better hunter."



JHEN MOHRAN

"The monster is just ridiculously huge. When you hunt down this particular monster, you'll be on a boat or ship where you actually aim the cannon at the monster, or [you can] jump on the back of the monster and then slay it from on top of it. That's a very different, distinct characteristic."

PUBLISHER/ DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
RELEASE: SPRING
Wii

MAD ABOUT THE MOUSE

A legendary game designer joins forces with the world's most recognizable cartoon character. Find out why Epic Mickey is primed to live up to its name.

PUBLISHER: DISNEY INTERACTIVE
DEVELOPER: JUNCTION POINT
RELEASE: LATE 2010
Wii

Mickey Mouse is undeniably one of the biggest entertainment icons in the world, but let's face it—he hasn't exactly made a significant impact in video games recently (aside from his brief appearances in Kingdom Hearts). Fortunately for the rambunctious rodent, that's likely to change late this year with the release of Epic Mickey for the Wii console. Helmed by Warren Spector—an acclaimed developer (and certifiable Disney fanatic) known for PC titles such as Deus Ex and Thief: Deadly Shadows—the game takes Mickey into an adventure-filled realm of lost Disney ideas where he'll use paint to create things within the world, and thinner to destroy them. Depending on how you behave, you'll be able to change Mickey's appearance and abilities, becoming a lovable, helpful Hero or a mischievous Scrapper, or possibly something in between. You'll also meet up with alternate-world versions of beloved Disney characters (such as a robotic Donald Duck), and spend a lot of time dealing with Oswald the Lucky Rabbit—an obscure character created by Walt Disney himself before he ever thought of Mickey. We recently had the opportunity to speak to Spector about the game, his love of Disney, and the influences that could make Epic Mickey one of the breakout titles of 2010. —**CHRIS H.**

INTERVIEW

NINTENDO POWER **We understand you're a huge Disney fan—which kind of surprised us, to be honest. When did that start?**

WARREN SPECTOR The day I was born! I'm serious. It's literally true. My dad bought himself a car and he bought me a Pluto plush toy on my day of birth. And I've still got it. It's in my office! In fact, I've got a picture of it on my phone if you want to see it. There's a picture of me less than a year later and my mom put mouse ears on me and I'm, like, screaming with glee—little year-old Warren. And like everybody else, I used to watch *The Wonderful World of Disney* and *Wonderful World of Color* and all those Sunday-night shows. I was a cartoon geek. And when I graduated from college I got Disney stock from all my family members as a present. So this has been going on for a very long time. This is a lifelong obsession.

“What I wanted to do to some extent was to get Mickey back to his roots, you know?”

Is there anything you can pinpoint as a favorite Mickey cartoon or a favorite Disney cartoon?
There are so many of them! Frankly, there are a handful of them that I think are just wonderful. You’ve got to love “The Band Concert” and “Lonesome Ghosts” and “Clock Cleaners.” I’ve always liked “The Mad Doctor” because it’s kind of funny and scary at the same time, which I find really appealing. When I was a kid I know I loved “Steamboat Willie.” You know, “Look, he’s playing the teeth of that thing like a xylophone!” I’ll never forget “Plane Crazy,” watching him use a Dachshund as a rubber band to power an airplane. I mean, you’ve gotta love a guy who will abuse animals like that.

When we first learned about this project I remember hearing about how you were “reinventing Mickey Mouse,” and I was sort of expecting a radical new look for the character, not a throwback to a classic design. How did you arrive at this look?
I thought about it a lot. I could show you...thousands of concept sketches for Mickey...and some of those concepts that we rejected were pretty radical. I mean, crazy radical. And we ended up with a slate of about half a dozen that I really liked, and you know, over time I looked at them, the team looked at them, Disney looked at them, we even focus-tested some of these, and at the end of the day, what we found was even people who claimed not to like Mickey Mouse got really angry when you messed with their childhood.

The way to make Mickey special, I think, is not to put him in a zoot suit or do what some other cartoon companies have done with their characters in trying to make them cool. If you try to tell somebody something’s cool, inevitably it ends up being uncool. And so what I wanted to do to some extent was to get Mickey back to his roots, you know? But having said that, if you look at our Mickey, look at it closely, it is so off-model you wouldn’t believe it. I mean, Disney artists—they’d go white! He’s pretty radically changed; they’re just changes that are pretty subtle. It was very much a choice to go with kind of a retro look. But remember, if you behave in certain ways, you can change him pretty radically. You didn’t see the full extent of the Scrapper effect yet. How you behave determines how Mickey looks and what his abilities are and all that.

In our last interview (in Vol. 249) you mentioned how Mickey used to be more cartoony and he was able to take off his tail and use it as a sword or whatever. Is there going to be anything along those lines in this game?
Not in this game. Mickey’s integrity in this game is too important.... Mickey’s abilities are based on paint and thinner and running and jumping in this game.

Is Mickey your favorite Disney character?
He’s in my top three. He used to be in my top two. Number one with a bullet: Scrooge McDuck. I love Uncle Scrooge. And Mickey was number two until—you know, I’ve always known about Oswald. I was a film historian and animation buff from the time I was about in eighth grade...so I knew who Oswald was. But those cartoons were lost for so many years, and Disney rereleased 13 [of them]. They’re fantastic. So Oswald is number two for me right now. And that tail reference? There might be an Oswald connection there—you never know—as to why I don’t want Mickey to do that. But Mickey’s number three.

I know you don’t like to pigeonhole your games into genres, but I’m pretty sure Epic Mickey would be in a different genre than your previous games. So is there anything you’re going

to as inspiration or reference when creating this game?

Absolutely. All the games I do are in some way inspired by the games I'm playing and either loving or being frustrated by or both. And in this case I was playing a lot of Mario. Paper Mario was out and about, and I loved that. Mario Galaxy came out sort of in the middle. But the Mario games in general are obviously an inspiration. I mean, Super Mario 64 is still a great game. And the Zelda games—I live for those things. I mean, I live for Zelda games. A new Zelda game comes out—I'm done. You're not going to see me until I've finished. And I am always intrigued by the Ratchet & Clank games. And so those three sort of combined with Deus Ex, if you mash all those things together you kind of end up with what I hope this game feels like. People ask me, "What percentage is platforming? What percentage is exploration? What percentage is puzzle solving?" And my answer is, well, that's up to the player. Whether this game feels like a Mario game is answered by the player. Is the player playing it like a Mario game? Or is the player playing it like Ratchet & Clank? I want the player to decide that.

Was Okami an influence?

We certainly played Okami, and we're just after some different kinds of stuff. There are superficial similarities, and that's really about it. We played de Blob—any game that has any kind of painting mechanic we obviously took a close look at. But what we discovered is they're really doing things that are very different from what we're doing. I think for us it's a little more that we're dynamically changing the environment in real time. Stuff is happening all around you. It's not that you're, like, casting a spell that changes things; it's that you are dynamically changing the situation in the moment, right there.

Did you ever think about just making the game 2-D instead of 3-D?

No one's asked me that before, and the answer to that is yes, interestingly enough. I really love 2-D games and I'm sad to see that only Nintendo is making 2-D games now. And the indie scene is full of 2-D games. But at the end of the day, I think that if you really want to take Mickey to a new level as a game star, I think you have to go 3-D. But you'll notice there are some 2-D platforming sections. That'll scratch that itch for me.

It's the first time you're dealing with a licensed property, right? Have there been any headaches or surprises involved?

Of course! [Laughing] I'm used to just making a decision! No one was going to tell me what JC Denton in Deus Ex could do or not do! There are approvals you have to get for all sorts of stuff. That's been a new experience for me. But the reality is every game exists in a creative box. I've got my own box. There are things that will be in the game and won't be in the game that I decide. And it's just that there's another box layer on top of that. But for the most part you'd be surprised how big the box is. That's really the big surprise for me.

And conversely, is this more rewarding than working on an original property?

Oh, heck yeah. I could go outside and yell, "Hey, it's JC Denton!" and no one would know what I was talking about. I could go out and say, "Hey, it's Mickey Mouse!" and at least every kid in the world would come running.... The challenges associated with that, the sense of responsibility associated with that, and the opportunity afforded by that is just incredible. Yeah, there are huge rewards. My entire team—we're a footnote in history. Most people never get this kind of opportunity, ever.

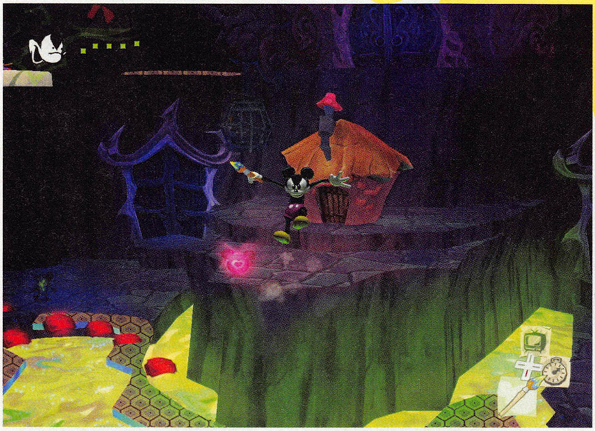
What's your approach to humor in the game?

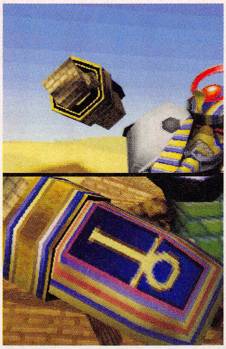
Humor is in the eye of the beholder. I get the hugest kick out of [what I call] the League of Petes. I just find it immensely amusing that Peg-Leg Pete, who later became Black Pete and is now just Pete, has been bedeviling Mickey for years. So there's a running gag in the game where you're constantly running into Pete.... I get to dress him up in Small World doll costumes, and I get to dress him up in other costumes that we're not going to talk about right now. I find the idea of every time you turn the corner and run into another Pete very funny. There are little moments like that throughout. I hope, anyway. And then in our story moments where we control the comic timing and stuff we'll be able to get some laughs.

When it comes down to the essence of Mickey Mouse, why do you think he's been so popular for so long?

I think it's because Disney has been smart enough or lucky enough or whatever it is to recognize that nothing can stay static and remain relevant. As scary as it may be to some people to contemplate changing Mickey Mouse, the reality is Mickey Mouse has changed many times. The situations he found himself in changed, the way he looked changed, the ways he behaved changed, the characters he interacted with changed, the costumes he wore changed. And all of that, I think, has helped keep him relevant. More recently, I think Disney has focused on him a little bit more as a character aimed either at kids or couture, you know? And all I want to do is kind of rewind the clock and say, "Hey look, Mickey's been all of these things. He's been this crazy, crazy thing in 'Runaway Brain.' He's been this anarchic, cartoony guy in 'Steamboat Willie.' He's been this heroic guy in 'Brave Little Tailor.' He's been the leader of the gang in 'The Band Concert.' Which one do you like?" And [then we'll] offer players the option of exploring the different aspects of Mickey's personality.

> "My entire team—we're a footnote in history. Most people never get this kind of opportunity, ever."

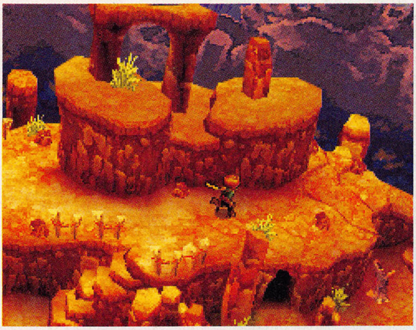


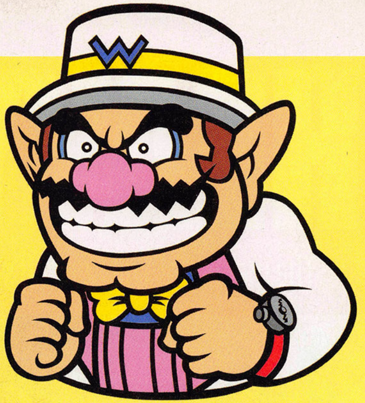


Golden Sun DS

Fans of the Game Boy Advance Golden Sun series have been clamoring for a sequel since 2003's Golden Sun: The Lost Age. Nintendo and Camelot answered that call in a grand fashion during last year's E3, showing off a playable Nintendo DS demo packed with 3-D environments and flashy summon spells. Little is known about the game's story, mechanics, or even its title, but all should be revealed in the months to come, as Nintendo has affirmed that Golden Sun DS is on track for a 2010 release. **—CASEY L.**

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** DEVELOPER: **CAMELOT** RELEASE: **TBD** DS





WARIOWARE D.I.Y.

There've been six microgame-packed WarioWare titles, and now it's time to make your own. WarioWare D.I.Y. lets you create five-second microgames from the ground up by designing your own graphics, gameplay, and music, or tweak any of the Nintendo-designed games included on the DS card. At last your dreams of making a game about a dog balancing a meatball on its nose can be realized! One of the most unique aspects of an already unique game-making game is the ability to hum a tune into the DS microphone and have it transformed into onscreen notes, which can then be assigned different instruments. Toss in microgame sharing and the promise of downloadable games from Nintendo, and you've got the building blocks of a modern classic. **—RANDY N.**

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS**
RELEASE: **MARCH** DS

KEN IN 2010

"IN THE YEAR 2010, EXERCISE IS RENDERED UNNECESSARY THANKS TO INVASIVE BIONIC IMPLANTS."

MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL 2K10

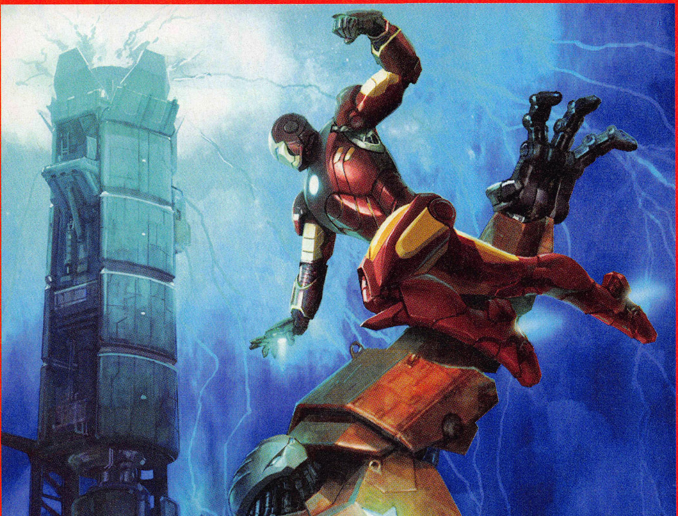
Slated to ship the same week as spring training begins, Major League Baseball 2K10 looks to introduce a number of new features and tweaks to last year's solid sim. New cover athlete Evan Longoria of the Tampa Bay Rays won the AL Gold Glove award for his skilled fielding at third base last season, and 2K Sports hopes it can win the hearts of baseball fans with its own fielding improvements. Playing the field should be easier than ever, as overhauled motions and new catch animations let you cover more ground and give you a better shot at making a game-saving catch.

In addition to upgraded hitting and pitching controls, MLB 2K10 will introduce a new Pitch Tell feature, which can help you spot a hurler's pitch well before it reaches the plate. And as with previous versions, 2K's Signature Style approach means each player looks and acts like the real thing, and hundreds of new animations have been added to the game for the 2010 season. **—ANDREW H.**

PUBLISHER: **2K SPORTS**
DEVELOPER: **VISUAL CONCEPTS**
RELEASE: **MARCH** Wii

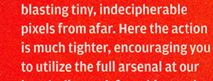
HEAVY METAL

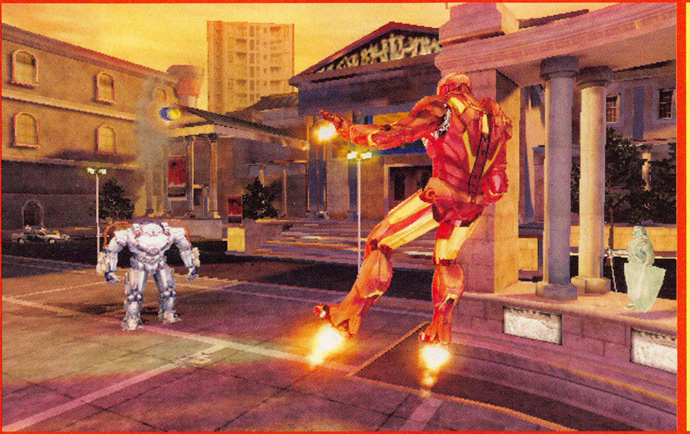
The makers of The Conduit suit up for a Wii-exclusive version of Iron Man 2.



ONE OF THE year's most anticipated entertainment events is Iron Man's return to the big screen. (In fact, we're planning to get in line for our tickets as soon as we finish this monstrous preview feature.) It's only natural, then, that ol' Shellhead is set to star in another video game, as well. This time he's coming to Wii courtesy of High Voltage Software—which previously worked with publisher Sega on The Conduit—in an adventure forged specifically for Nintendo's console.

The first thing that leapt out during our exclusive sneak peak is that the levels are designed for up-close-and-personal combat. One of the main complaints about the previous game (developed by a different studio) was that environments were so wide-open you'd spend most of your time blasting tiny, indecipherable pixels from afar. Here the action is much tighter, encouraging you to utilize the full arsenal at our hero's disposal, from his repulsor beams to his fists. As you progress, you can upgrade his weapons as you see fit by expending Tech Points, which you'll find hidden throughout each stage and earn via certain achievements. Iron Man

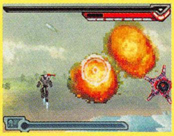


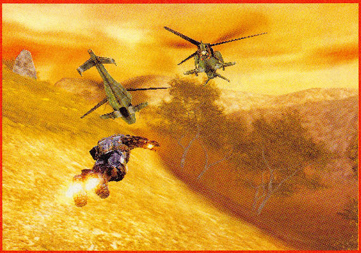


DS

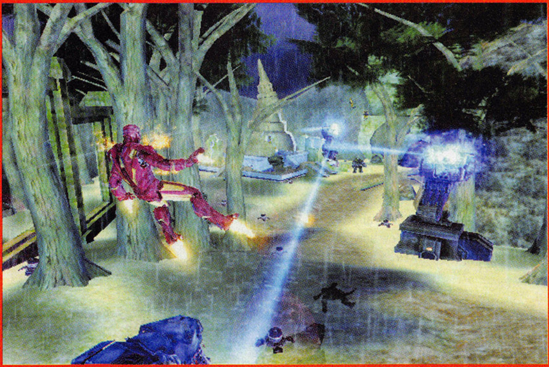
POCKET PROTECTOR

A DS version of Iron Man 2 is also in the works. Griptonite Games is handling development duties on this 2.5-D sidescroller, and though you obviously can't tell from still screens, the game looks pretty impressive in motion.



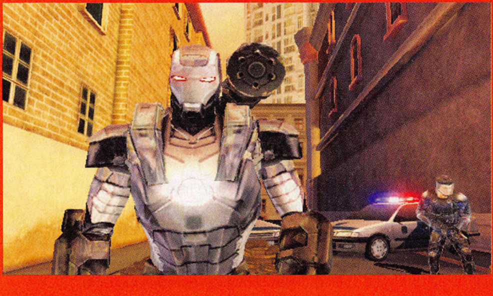


[Above] Heavily armed copters are about as effective as moths against War Machine.

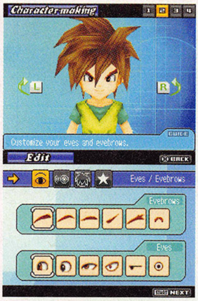


also borrows a page from another armored hero—Samus Aran—with a scan mode that allows you to uncover secret areas, as well as interact with certain elements of the environment. One example of the latter: hacking a computerized turret to turn it against your foes. When all of that bleeding-edge technology isn't enough, you can use your surroundings to your advantage; we saw Iron Man bring down billboards, giant monitors, and even an entire parking garage on his adversaries. The game's visuals are still a bit rough around the edges, but they boast a lot of the same hardware-pushing effects as The Conduit; the protagonist's shiny, reflective armor is particularly impressive.

Mixing things up from time to time are After Burner-inspired flying levels. These typically follow Iron Man from behind, but they switch to a more-cinematic viewpoint during certain sequences, like when you're soaring through an abandoned office building as an enemy gunship shoots out all the windows. Adding a bit more variety is the inclusion of War Machine as a second playable character. James Rhodes's armor is a bit sturdier than Tony Stark's, and it comes equipped with more firepower (including the trademark shoulder-mounted chaingun). The tradeoff is that it's not quite as maneuverable. Rounding out the package is an original story written by Eisner Award-winning scribe Matt Fraction. Details remain under wraps, but Sega claims the narrative will serve as a bridge between the movie and comic universes. —STEVE T.

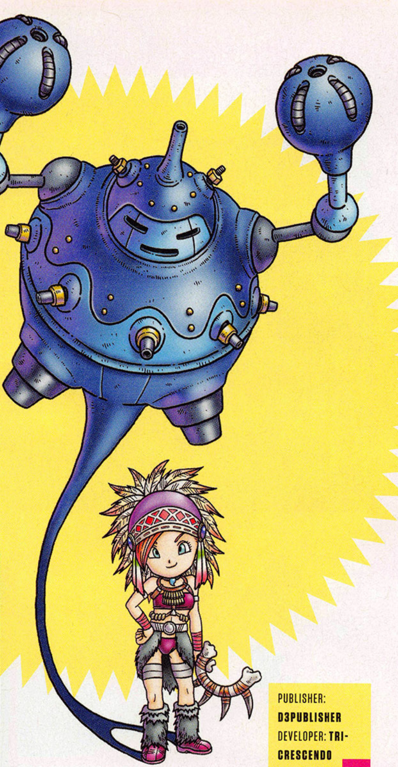


PUBLISHER: **SEGA** DEVELOPER: **HIGH VOLTAGE SOFTWARE** RELEASE: **MAY** Wii

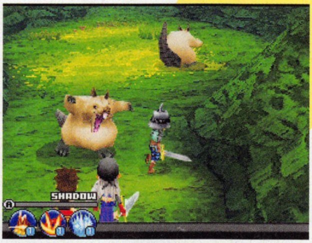


Customize your eyes and eyebrows.

BLUE DRAGON: AWAKENED SHADOW



So far, the Blue Dragon series has offered various RPG flavors for players to sink their teeth into. Blue Dragon: Awakened Shadow follows suit with an action-oriented approach that's very different from either the straightforward JRPG focus of the original or the real-time strategy gameplay of Blue Dragon Plus. Taking place two years after the first game's events, Awakened Shadow puts you in the role of an unknown individual who emerges from a subterranean facility and manages to stave off a monstrous attack on the nearby city of Neo Jibral. You'll eventually meet up with the main characters from the other Blue Dragon games and dive into a series of quests and adventures. For the first time in the series, you're given the freedom to create your main character from scratch, customizing the gender, facial appearance, outfits, and hairstyle. Plus, any changes you make in your character's weapons and equipment are reflected visually. In addition to running around and hacking away at foes, you'll be able to utilize shadows that bestow powerful skills in battle. **—NATHAN M.**



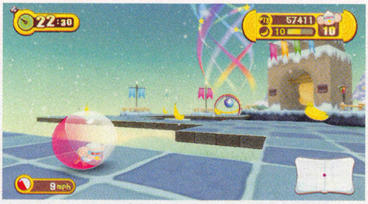
PUBLISHER: **D3PUBLISHER** DEVELOPER: **TRI-CRESCENDO** RELEASE: **Q2** DS

KEN IN 2010

"IN THE YEAR 2010, NATURE STRIKES BACK AT MANKIND AS GIANT TREES SPROUT SENTIENT, MURDEROUS SEED PODS TO DEFEND THEMSELVES!"

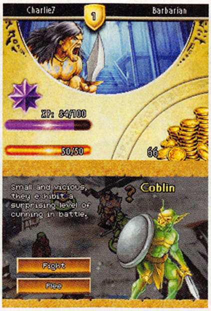
SUPER MONKEY BALL STEP & ROLL

It was only a matter of time: Super Monkey Ball Step and Roll is bringing the hit stage-tilting game to Wii with support for the Wii Balance Board accessory. You simply choose a monkey (sealed, of course, in a ball), then roll to the finish line before the timer runs out or you fall off the edge, collecting bananas along the way. The game will be easier if you've gotten good at correcting your balance in Wii Fit: the slightest weight shift affects the monkeys' trajectories. For those who don't have a balance board—or who just prefer traditional controls—there's an option to play using a Wii Remote controller. Or a friend can use the remote to blast obstacles out of your way while you roll your monkey via the balance board. Of course, it wouldn't be Monkey Ball without plenty of minigames, and the ones in this game are no slouches—however, trying to knock other monkeys off the level by spinning a top with the balance board is not for those who've eaten recently. **—RANDY N.**



PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: **SEGA** RELEASE: **SPRING** Wii

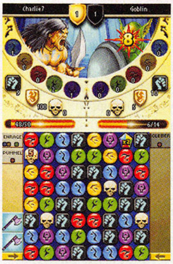
Puzzle Quest II



Small and vicious, they exhibit a surprising level of cunning in battle.

Following the sci-fi-themed detour that was Puzzle Quest: Galactrix, the fiendishly addictive series returns to its fantasy roots this spring with Puzzle Quest 2, the follow-up to the original puzzle-meets-role-playing experience. Although the sequel looks to maintain the fundamental balance between match-three puzzle gameplay and fantasy-RPG elements and characters, there will be a few changes the second time around.

Most notable may be the move away from turn-based puzzle combat; D3Publisher says the sequel will utilize a new real-time approach. New magic spells, weapons, and shields are also in the works, and players will be able to choose between four character classes (Assassin, Barbarian, Inquisitor, and War Mage). Your choice of class may affect your path in the game, which finds your warrior battling the demon Gorgon to free the city of Verloren.

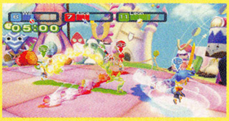


Whether these new additions and changes will alter the experience for the better remains to be seen, but if Puzzle Quest 2 retains even a fraction of the series's magic touch, puzzle fans will have plenty to look forward to this spring. **—ANDREW H.**

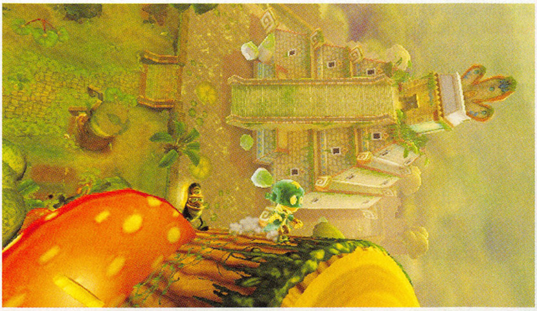
PUBLISHER: **D3PUBLISHER** DEVELOPER: **INFINITE INTERACTIVE**
RELEASE: **SPRING**
DS

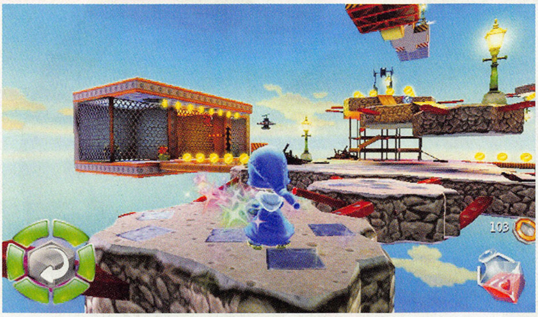
Line Attack Heroes

Rarely do we see fights break out in party conga lines, but Line Attack Heroes takes this odd premise and cleverly runs with it. Defeating opponents in this whimsical arena brawler forces them to join your growing single-file procession, and adding more-powerful heroes to your lineup gives you access to their unique weaponry and powers. The best part: you then get to use the conga line itself as a weapon. **—NATHAN M.**



PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **GREZZO** RELEASE: **TBD**
Wii





FLIP'S TWISTED WORLD

The free-floating environments and platform action may seem familiar to fans of Super Mario Galaxy, but Flip's Twisted World looks to put its own unique slant on the genre by letting you rotate each environment as needed to progress through the adventure. Hero Flip is a wizard's apprentice who uses a magic cube (controlled by flicks of the Wii Remote) to rotate the world 90 degrees at a time to unlock new pathways via the change in perspective.

Flip's Twisted World features five distinct settings—including a temple-filled jungle and a floating clock tower—and Flip can find and use different magic tools to help him along the way. In case you're not totally sold on the idea of using the Wii Remote to shift the environments, Majesco says that the Classic and GameCube controllers will also work. We're always game for a creative 3-D platformer, so here's hoping Flip's promising premise pays off—and holds us over till Super Mario Galaxy 2 arrives! **—ANDREW H.**

PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO** DEVELOPER: **FROZEN NORTH PRODUCTIONS**
RELEASE: **SPRING**
Wii

INTERVIEW

THE DEMON WHISPERER

Eiji Ishida has spent a decade summoning the demons of Atlus's Shin Megami Tensei series, serving as the chief designer of Shin Megami Tensei: Nocturne and the two most recent chapters of its Devil Summoner spin-off series. Now, as director, he's taken the helm of the newest installment—**Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey** for the Nintendo DS.

BY CASEY LOE

PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: **ATLUS** RELEASE: **MARCH** DS

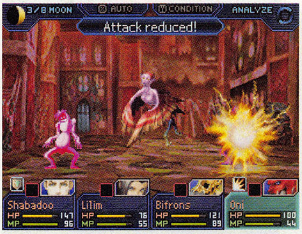
NINTENDO POWER **In America, Shin Megami Tensei is better known for its spin-offs, such as the PlayStation Persona series. How would you explain to a Persona fan what makes the core Shin Megami Tensei series unique and interesting?**

EIJI ISHIDA All the titles in the series depict the extraordinary invading our ordinary lives, but the Persona series depicts the end of the world around the protagonist, whereas the main Shin Megami Tensei series depicts the end of the world itself. Also, whereas the Persona series revolves around everyday relationships with people such as friends and lovers, in the main Shin Megami Tensei series you deal with worlds that have fallen apart and godlike entities. The story of a mainline Shin Megami Tensei game tends to be more grand and apocalyptic.

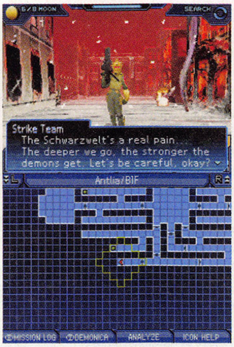
The Shin Megami Tensei series is about gaining the power necessary to survive in a dangerous and destructive world. It's the methods of acquiring this power that give the main Shin Megami Tensei series its chief characteristics.

Such as?

One is the Demon Conversation system, in which you persuade enemy demons to become your allies and lend you their power. I think it's close to picking someone



Attack reduced!



Strike Team
The Schwarzwelt's a real pain...
The deeper we go, the stronger the demons get. Let's be careful, okay?

up in a bar, but here you're dealing with inhuman beings, so it becomes much more complicated. There are times when they approach you kindly, then suddenly attack; or ask for money, then just take it and leave. (Maybe they're not so different from humans after all?) Communicating with these eccentric demons and negotiating with them is the fun part of Demon Conversation, and forms a good deal of the series's flavor.

The other part is Demon Fusion, where you use technology to fuse demons together and make a stronger demon. The newly born demon inherits the skills of the fused demons, so the player can use this system to create his or her own demon allies. That kind of customization is what makes the games so addictive.

Why did you decide to set a Shin Megami Tensei game outside of Tokyo for the first time? And where else would you like to take the series in the future?
In order to depict danger on a worldwide scale, we needed to select an appropriate setting. For that reason, we thought a place that people associate with the Earth itself would be better than Tokyo, so we chose Antarctica. Beyond that, I believe the movie *The Thing* was no small influence....

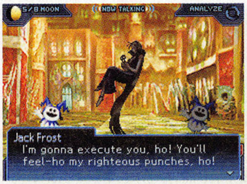
As for where I'd set future games in the main series, as long as it's a good fit for the game's theme and allows for a compelling premise, I'd be willing to try anything, even the inside of John Malkovich's head.

I've heard that you're a fan of Western-developed games. What are some of your favorites?
I've been fascinated with the dynamism of graphics and immersive game experience that many Western games have. Lately my favorites have been Fallout 3 and Left 4 Dead 2. Now that development is done, I'm living the good life and getting back into games, but my next project is already underway, so these salad days won't last long.

Have games like those had any influence on the development of Strange Journey?
I think PC games I came across in my high-school days, like Drakkhen and Dungeon Master, made a big impression on me. Even then, I was fascinated with the immersive quality that sucked players into the game's world, and I always strive to recreate that experience in my games.

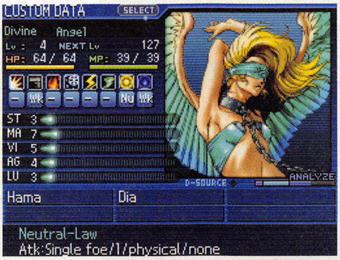
To what extent did you consider foreign audiences when developing Strange Journey?
Given changes like moving the setting from Tokyo to Antarctica, the characters coming from all over the globe, and a heavier emphasis on the sci-fi aspects, you might think that we're reaching out to the overseas market, but a lot of these changes are just the result of [executive producer] Kaneko's and my tastes.

"We believe games where you take your time and play them into the ground...are best served on the DS."



Jack Frost
I'm gonna execute you, ho! You'll feel-ho my righteous punches, ho!

You may be prepared for a world-ending apocalypse, but are you prepared for smack-talk from cute snow demons?



CUSTOM DATA
Divine Angel
Lv : 4 NEXT Lv 127
HP: 64/ 64 MP: 39/ 39
ST 3
MA 7
VI 5
AG 4
LU 3
Hama
Dia
Neutral-Law
Atk:Single foe/1/physical/none

Strange Journey has several cosmetic similarities to the Etrian Odyssey series. Do the two series have any staff in common, or use a common game engine?
The game designers who handled the battle system and some of the programming staff are from Lancarse [a production company involved with the Etrian Odyssey games], and some aspects, like the game engine, are a customized version of Etrian's. Beyond that, a lot of the people who worked on Strange Journey were familiar with the genre.

Did the success of the Etrian Odyssey series influence your decision to make Strange Journey on the DS?
Yes, you could say that. Etrian Odyssey proved that there are still plenty of DS owners who enjoy this genre. But there were other reasons we went with the DS, too. One is that it has the largest installed base within our target audience. Another reason is that we believe games where you take your time and play them into the ground—in other words, games that require a certain level of concentration—are best served on the DS. My take is that the relaxed feeling you get from knowing you can just quit whenever you want actually lets you focus longer and harder. Being able to dedicate the bottom screen to information was also a big plus.

How has developing for a portable platform changed the way you approach the series?
This is the first title I was involved with as a director, so I can't tell you through personal experience.... But if I had to give an answer, it would be

> “More demons means more fusion possibilities...it means being able to put new demons on every floor.”

that we were able to spend more time tuning the game system since the cost of changing graphics was much lower than with console games. For a game made to be played intensely, this was a big strength.

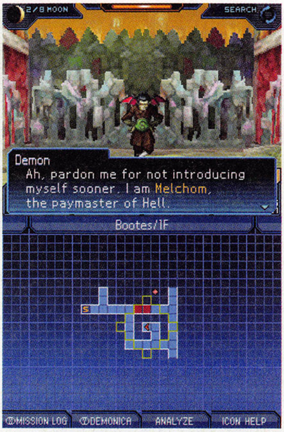
Why did you decide to use an old-fashioned password system for exchanging demons between players, rather than allowing Wi-Fi or wireless trading?
Call it an homage to the great games of the past! ... Actually, it’s because we decided this was the simplest method, and the easiest way to circulate the passwords. With a password-based system, you can post your passwords on Internet forums, show them on your blog, share them with your friends by email, and so forth.

In fact, there already have been cases where passwords were posted on a famous voice actor’s blog and their fans used that password in their own games. That kind of viral quality is an interesting phenomenon you can only get with a password system. My hope now is that some Hollywood star will use the password system to brag about an amazing demon he or she made. (Do you suppose Megan Fox likes JRPGs?)

What inspired the changes in the demon fusion system in this entry?
We redesigned the fusion system to make for a fast-paced game where you would create new demons one after another, and mow down any enemies that stand in your way.

The biggest change was the increase in the number of demons to 300, which is about 100 more than Shin Megami Tensei: Nocturne had. More demons means more fusion possibilities, and most importantly, it means being able to put new demons on every floor. This vast array of demons is meant to stimulate the player’s desire to fuse, whether it stems from, “I want to fuse my demons with that demon!” or, “I need to make new demons to defeat this enemy!”

Next, we loosened the restrictions on the skill-inheritance system. In previous games, skill inheritance had strict conditions so you couldn’t transfer just any skill to your favorite demon. But with a Demon Source (a skill-granting item you get from ally demons), you can now customize at will. If you have the right Demon Source, you can create a weak, low-level demon with powerful skills, or give an ice fairy a fire spell. (Though you’d think the fairy would melt if he wielded fire, wouldn’t you?) My hope is that people use the freedom of this system to create their own customized demons, so they can brag to each other and trade passwords.



Demon
Ah, pardon me for not introducing myself sooner. I am Melchom, the paymaster of Hell.

Why have you returned to the law-vs.-chaos system that was used in early Shin Megami Tensei games?
I can’t give you many details, since they’d be a spoiler, but the law/neutral/chaos alignments were brought back because they best allowed the player to experience the story’s themes for him- or herself.

Your alignment will change depending on your actions and decisions made in the game. This alignment will affect your game in several ways: for starters, it changes the way the story progresses and ultimately which of the multiple endings results.

The other thing is that it changes your relationship with demons—friend or foe. Demons have their own alignment, and they’ll be more cooperative when their alignment matches yours. This comes into play most in Demon Conversation and Demon Co-Op attacks [a system where demon allies of the same alignment provide follow-up attacks for each other].

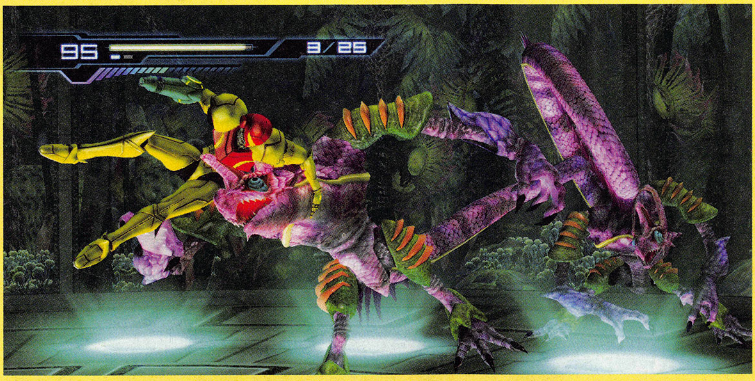
Why did you choose to assign players a character type based on an in-game quiz instead of allowing them to develop their own characters?
We wanted the player to focus on powering up the party through fusion, so we removed the ability to fine-tune the protagonist’s stats. Plus, if there are too many things to manage, the game is in danger of becoming too complicated.

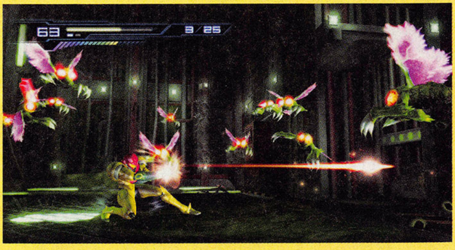
Do you have any final comments about the game for our readers?
I’m very excited to release this game in America, a place that in a sense has made me who I am today. I’m ecstatic! RPG freaks should definitely try this out; I think it provides a good level of challenge. I’m proud to say that we’re right up there with Demon’s Souls [on the PS3]. But the system itself is easy to understand, so I also hope people who haven’t played RPGs before will give it a try.

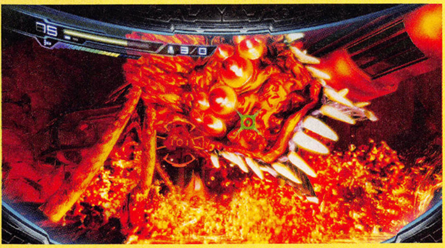
THE BIG MYSTERIES SURROUNDING METROID: OTHER M

WE'VE HAD SEVEN months to get used to the fact that the next Metroid game is coming from the studio behind Ninja Gaiden, but the possibilities still blow our minds. Unfortunately for news-hungry fans such as us, Nintendo put the game back into supersecret mode immediately after its industry-rocking debut at E3 last June. We could fill an entire issue with what we don't know about this game, but instead we'll discuss the three biggest questions surrounding the Wii console's most compelling story of 2010.

—CHRIS SL.







WHAT IS IT, EXACTLY?

The debut trailer and screenshots showcased the series's recent style of first-person shooting as well as the 2-D action of old-school Metroid games. There were even scenes of Samus running toward the screen while being chased, plus plenty of cinematic camera angles that spun all over the place as Samus put the hurt on alien attackers. So...how exactly does this game play? How much of it is a side-scroller, and how much is an FPS?

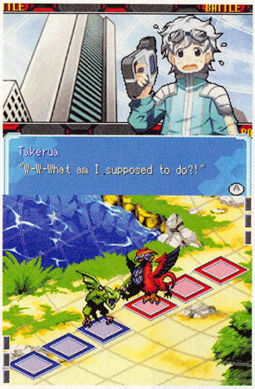
PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO**
RELEASE: **TBD**
Wii

HOW DIFFERENT WILL A TEAM NINJA METROID FEEL?

Until now, Retro had been the only studio outside of Nintendo trusted to create a Metroid game, and its Prime trilogy was so different from what came before it that the change in developer made sense. But how will the now-established first-person gameplay—as well as the classic 2-D elements—feel coming from Team Ninja? There is a definite focus with Other M on making Samus even cooler, with flashier moves that include hand-to-hand grapple attacks for the first time. We love what we've seen so far, but it's still nice to know that series cocreator Yoshio Sakamoto and other longtime Metroid experts at Nintendo remain the guiding force behind Team Ninja's efforts.

WHAT'S THE STORY?

The trailer made it clear that the story will play a much bigger role than in any previous Metroid game, with top-notch cinema sequences, plenty of new supporting characters, and dialogue that hinted at a deep plot. Fans that have played Metroid Fusion on the GBA might have caught the line "Any objections, lady?", which seems to confirm the appearance of a commander named Adam from Samus's past. There was also a cut-scene that showed a very ticked-off Mother Brain, although it looked as if it might be a flashback to the final battle of Super Metroid. And finally, we heard Samus speak in the trailer, but will the previously silent heroine talk often?

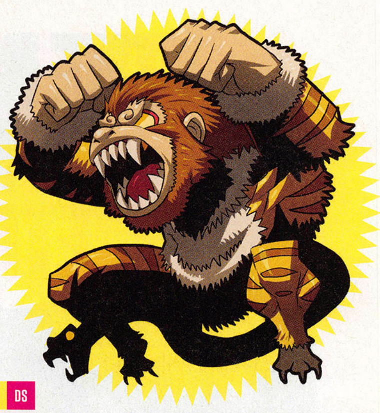


Takerua
"W-W-What am I supposed to do?!"

FOTO SHOWDOWN

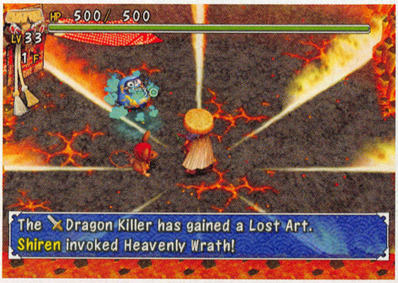
Going back to the original Monster Rancher, creature-breeding-and-battling games have always had fun with unusual methods of monster generation. Foto Showdown is Konami's latest contribution to the long tradition, this time using the Nintendo DSi's unique capabilities: snap a random picture, and you create a random monster. Or almost random, which is where the fun starts. A basic algorithm uses the colors in an image to determine each monster's abilities. Enterprising photographers can try to find ways to work the generation system. —**DAVID S.**

PUBLISHER: **KONAMI** DEVELOPER: **ALPHA UNIT** RELEASE: **FEBRUARY** **DS**

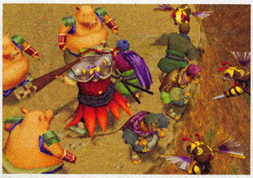


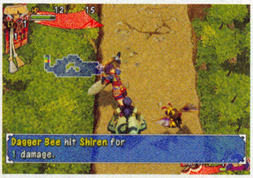
KEN IN 2010

"IN THE YEAR 2010, TECHNOLOGY WILL ALLOW PEOPLE TO CLIMB UP FLOWING LIQUID WITH THEIR BARE HANDS!"

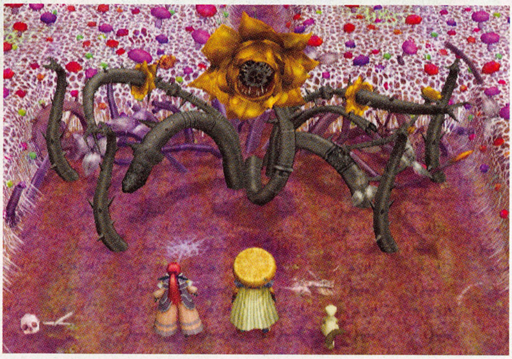


The Dragon Killer has gained a Lost Art.
Shiren invoked Heavenly Wrath!





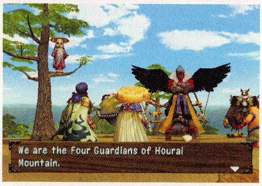
Dagger Bee hit Shiren for 1 damage.



SHIREN THE WANDERER

The Shiren the Wanderer series shares the same basic mechanics as the Pokémon Mystery Dungeon games, but has an original cast, a feudal Japanese setting, and a difficulty curve that's aimed at extremely hardcore players. This last aspect led to a lot of complaints about the recent DS version of Shiren the Wanderer; for some reason, Americans seem not to enjoy losing every item in their inventory and being reset to Level 1 whenever they die. But this newest installment of the series (the third in the chronology, but the first on the Wii console) offers a relatively painless entry point. Players can now select an easy mode in which they can keep their experience and much of their inventory when they die, and even in the normal mode a death will no longer reset players' levels. With the series's most glaring frustration removed, veterans and newbies alike can focus more on the new features in this installment, including a party of allies (with customizable AI) that watch your back, and a story that spans a thousand years of history to delve deep into the enigmatic Shiren's past. —**CASEY L.**

PUBLISHER: **ATLUS**
DEVELOPER: **CHUNSOFT**
RELEASE: **FEBRUARY** **Wii**

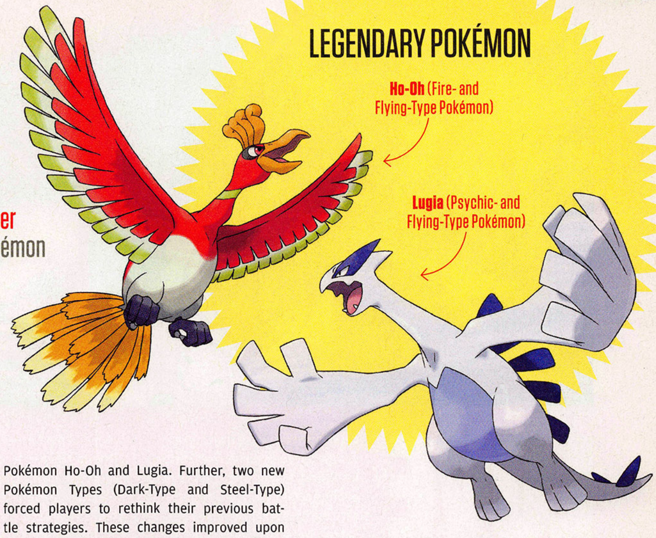


We are the Four Guardians of Hourai Mountain.

HEART AND SOUL

With **Pokémon HeartGold** and **SoulSilver Versions**, two of the most popular Pokémon quests are reborn and remastered.

LEGENDARY POKÉMON


Ho-Oh (Fire- and Flying-Type Pokémon)
Lugia (Psychic- and Flying-Type Pokémon)

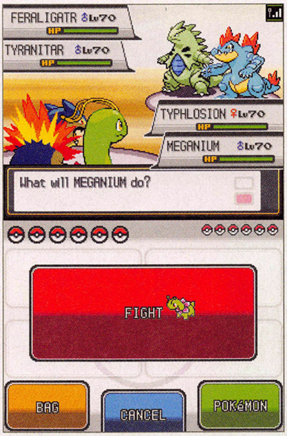
The original Pokémon releases, Pokémon Red and Blue Versions, were more than just games; they were a phenomenon. Improving on such popular titles must have seemed like a daunting task, but Nintendo succeeded with the follow-ups, Pokémon Gold and Silver Versions for Game Boy and Game Boy Color.

Moving away from Kanto and into the lush Johto region, this pair of sequels introduced several new features to the beloved series. A real-time clock made the game run with true day and night cycles, and certain Pokémon could be captured at only a specific time of day. The Pokémon Daycare facility allowed fans to become Pokémon breeders.

Of course, the most obvious addition was a legion of new Pokémon, including the Legendary Pokémon Ho-Oh and Lugia. Further, two new Pokémon Types (Dark-Type and Steel-Type) forced players to rethink their previous battle strategies. These changes improved upon already excellent games, making Pokémon Gold and Silver games that fans still regard as among the best in the series.

Now players will have a chance to revisit the Johto region in Pokémon HeartGold and SoulSilver, reimagined editions of those classic titles. These re-creations promise to be even better than the originals, with a host of new features that take advantage of the more powerful Nintendo DS hardware.

Perhaps the most obvious enhancement is the improved graphics, which surpass not only those of the original releases, but even those in the previous DS Pokémon titles. Subtle environmental touches like blowing wind and the sound of ocean waves crashing on the shore help bring the region of Johto to life as never before.



What will MEGANIUM do?

The touch screen is also put to good use to improve the games' interface. Maneuvering through menus is now even easier, and the new drag-and-drop feature makes organizing your items and Pokémon a breeze. Even better is the fact that you can now have two key items registered at once. So now, for example, you can switch from riding your bike to using your fishing rod without having to open up any menus.

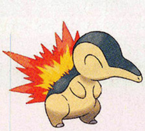
Since these games are built from the ground up for the Nintendo DS system, they take full advantage of its Wi-Fi capabilities. As in the previous DS adventures, you will be able to trade and battle Pokémon with Trainers from around the world.

The best Trainers know that in order to raise an effective Pokémon, you must befriend it. To that end, the top Pokémon in your party will follow you around as you explore the landscape. This is similar to the way that Pikachu walked behind the player in Pokémon Yellow, only now you can choose any Pokémon as your traveling companion. At any time, you can check in with your buddy to see how it is feeling and monitor its attitude toward you.

There are quite a few new additions, but these re-created titles retain all of the classic elements fans remember. Once again players will be able to choose from Chikorita, Cyndaquil, and Totodile at the start of the game, and the troublesome Team Rocket returns to the spotlight. Pokémon HeartGold and SoulSilver promise to be both a great way to revisit a classic adventure, and a chance for a new generation of players to experience the journey for the first time. **–PHIL T.**

STARTER POKÉMON

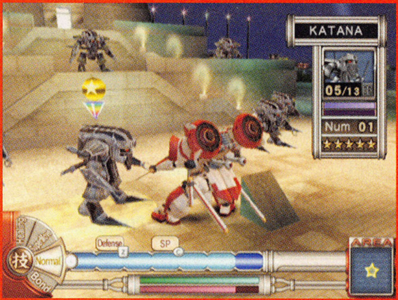
Chikorita
(Grass-Type Pokémon)



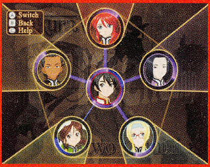
Cyndaquil
(Fire-Type Pokémon)

Totodile
(Water-Type Pokémon)

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO, THE POKÉMON COMPANY**
DEVELOPER: **GAME FREAK Inc.** RELEASE: **MARCH 14**
DS



Develop your relationships to become more powerful.



LOVE AND WAR

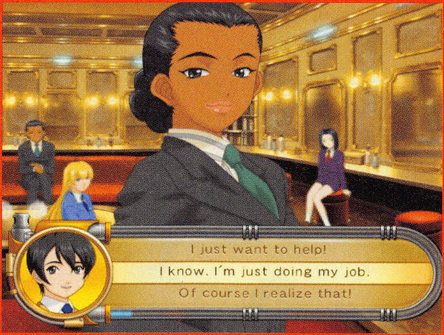
With Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love, North American Wii gamers finally get the chance to try the popular, previously Japanese-only series.

A GAME IN WHICH a young man and a variety of young women participate in musical theater when they're not piloting steam-powered mechs to save the world from demons? Yeah, Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love feels distinctly Japanese. And for more than a decade now, the series has stayed in the Land of the Rising Sun—until publisher NIS America decided to take a chance and release it on this side of the Pacific.

It's the year 1928 (a 1928 in which the airship is a common form of transportation, mind you), and 19-year-old Shinjiro Taiga has been transferred from his native Japan to New York City, where's he's been assigned to join the New York Combat Revue Star Division. This means he has to become acquainted with the troupe of performers at the Littlelip Theater (the headquarters of the Revue). But because he's young and inexperienced, Shinjiro isn't accepted into the fold immediately, so he must get his colleagues to warm up to him through the art of conversation. When talking to a person, you're given responses and/or actions to choose from (and only a few seconds to make your selection); choose wisely, and you'll create a stronger bond with that person.

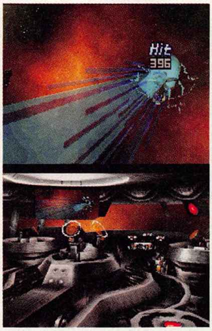
The strength of this bond comes into play when you get behind the controls of the transformable mechs called Super Telekinetic Assault Robots (STARs) in the game's turn-based battles. When you unleash a cooperative Joint Attack your bond with your allies becomes very important; the stronger the bond, the more powerful the Joint Attack. Of course, you have other options in combat. You can perform combos by repeatedly tapping A, or enter Super Attack mode (by choosing the option with the Control Pad) and then press A to devastate your opponents. Using the latter (as well as Joint Attacks) requires Spirit, however; fortunately, you can charge up your Spirit by pressing C. This assumes you have enough Mobility points left in your meter to do so, as virtually everything you do in the STARs—from walking to attacking to charging to defending—requires that you spend Mobility. Run out, and your turn is over (or you can end a turn prematurely by pressing the – Button to open the menu, then picking the appropriate option).

Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love is clearly offbeat, but it's that uniqueness that makes it so interesting. Hopefully NIS America's gamble pays off so we can experience more of what this long-running franchise has to offer. —JUSTIN C.



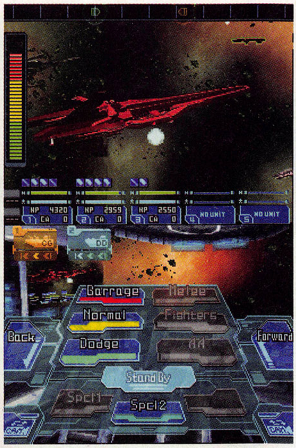
I just want to help!
I know. I'm just doing my job.
Of course I realize that!

PUBLISHER: **NIS AMERICA**
DEVELOPER: **IDEA FACTORY**
RELEASE: **Q1**
Wii



Nia

Okay, fine. let's shake on it, then. The name's Nia. Nia Lochlain.



INFINITE SPACE

Sci-fi RPGs are a dime a dozen (well, more like $30 apiece), but we just knew we could count on Platinum Games, who brought us the outstandingly original MadWorld, to do something new in the genre. That something is Infinite Space, an RPG that combines epic space battles with more-traditional, party-based combat—with a twist.

You see, before setting about swashbuckling across the galaxy, you get to design your own ship (which you can further customize later) from more than 100 parts. Not only that, but there's a roster of 150 different crew members to choose from, all of whom bring different skills and specialties to the ship, thus increasing your proficiency in battle and other areas.

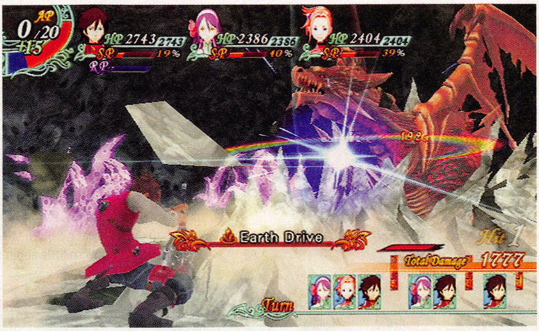
You'll travel from star system to star system, engaging in heated deep-space tactical showdowns that culminate in boarding the enemy ship and fighting on foot—so you'd better hope the crew you brought along knows how to aim a blaster. **—RANDY N.**

PUBLISHER: **SEGA** DEVELOPER: **PLATINUM GAMES / NUDE MAKER** RELEASE: **SPRING** **DS**

KEN IN 2010

"WAIT...IN THE YEAR 2010, I'M REALLY A CYBORG SCIENTIST INSTEAD OF A STREET FIGHTER? SERIOUSLY?"

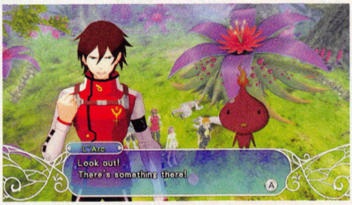
ARC RISE FANTASIA



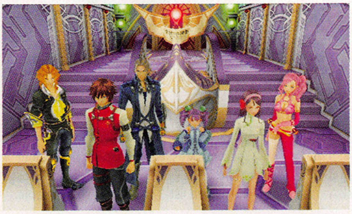
Arc Rise Fantasia represents what you might call a big second step. Developer ImageEpoch has a few successful projects under its belt so far—the Luminous Arc strategy-RPGs from Atlus, Sega's Sands of Destruction—but this is the fledgling studio's first go at a full-scale console game.

That is not to say those involved are entirely new at this, though. Hiroyuki Kanemaru, cutting his teeth as the project's director, comes from one of the leading RPG teams at Namco, where he worked on adventures like Tales of Symphonia. Arc Rise Fantasia's soundtrack, meanwhile, has an even more famous name attached: Yasunori Mitsuda, a fan favorite going back to Chrono Trigger and Xenogears. Gamers who've stayed up late watching the Cartoon Network might find the character designs familiar as well—Kenichi Yoshida also worked on the popular anime *Eureka Seven*.

Toss those influences together, and what comes out has a touch of the old and a bit of the new, combining colorful 3-D graphics with a just-so-slightly-retro turn-based combat system. It's not as fast and active as Symphonia's real-time battle scheme, but some RPG fans might welcome a game that lets them slow down and spend a few moments thinking ahead. **—DAVID S.**


L'Arc

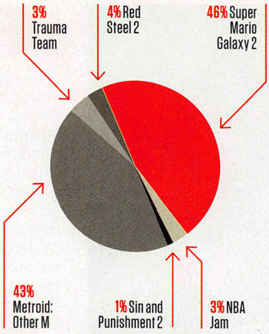
Look out!
There's something there!



PUBLISHER: **IGNITION ENTERTAINMENT**
DEVELOPER: **IMAGEEPOCH**
RELEASE: **SPRING**
Wii

WHAT WE WANT

(and how much we want it)

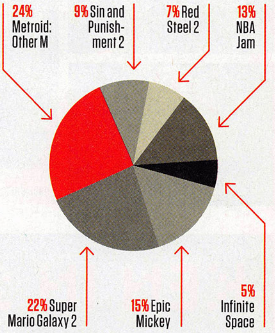


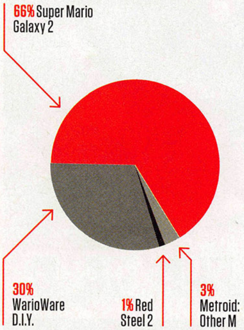
CHRIS SLATE, EDITOR IN CHIEF

There are a lot of good-looking games on the way, including at least a handful that I'm *dying* to play, but nothing comes close to my frothing demand for Galaxy 2 and Other M.

STEVE THOMASON, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Let's be honest: 2009 kind of sucked. I'm just happy to see a new year get under way, especially with so many promising Wii games on the horizon.



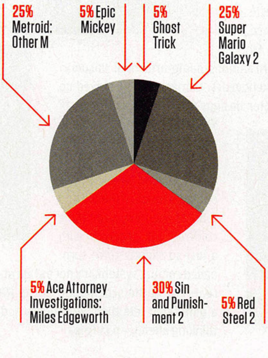


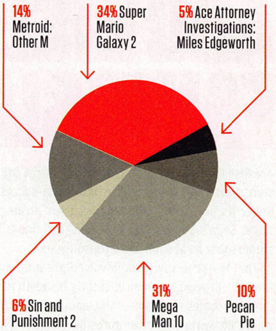
CHRIS IMLAY, ART DIRECTOR

I can hardly wait to save the galaxy with the universe's most respected plumber! But why am I the only staffer to pick WarioWare D.I.Y.? Make your own minigames, people!

JUSTIN CHENG, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

I have to admit that one of the main reasons why I'm so excited about Metroid: Other M (other than the fact that it's more Metroid) is because we know so little about it.



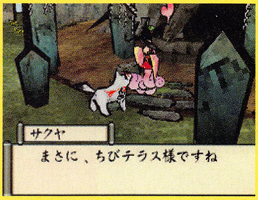


CHRIS HOFFMAN, SENIOR EDITOR

What's wrong with my colleagues? We were specifically asked to make pie charts, and yet I'm the only one with any pie on my most-anticipated list. The nerve of some people.

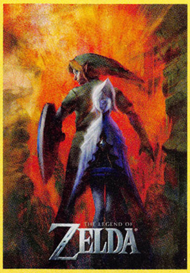
...AND WHAT WE HOPE TO SEE IN 2010

OKAMIDEN


サクヤ

まさに、ちびテラス様ですね

In Capcom's adorable, currently Japanese-only handheld sequel to Okami, you once again take on the role of a Celestial Brush-wielding wolf (this one's named Chibiterasu). This time, however, you can direct allies to help you out. **—JUSTIN C.**



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA Wii *

If the top-secret new Zelda for Wii makes it out before the end of 2010, this would officially become the best year ever for Nintendo fans. Why? It would mark the first time in history that new Mario, Metroid, and Zelda titles have released within the same year. (Doesn't that just give you goose bumps?)

We're getting a little ahead of ourselves however, since The Legend of Zelda Wii (whatever its final name is) probably won't have a solid release date for quite some time. But we have heard a bit more about the current status of the game via some statements made by longtime Zelda producer Eiji Aonuma. The development team is hoping to unveil the game at this June's E3, but even those plans are up in the air as the team works hard on getting the game ready. We do know that the project is beyond its conceptual phase and is well into development; specific scenarios and dungeons are being created as you read this. The game will feature the Wii MotionPlus accessory in a big way, and there is already a version running that uses the peripheral to let players swing Link's sword with one-to-one accuracy. The movement is said to feel so natural that it provides a true leap beyond the motion controls in Twilight Princess.

Revolutionary control appears to be only the tip of the iceberg. A primary mission with the next Zelda is to bring big new ideas to the series; so much so that—as with the series's landmark N64 entry Ocarina of Time—the game will provide a new starting point for future sequels to build upon. As evidence of the focus on fresh ideas, Shigeru Miyamoto has been deeply involved with longtime Zelda producer Eiji Aonuma and his team since the start of production. We've been told to expect significant changes to the traditional Zelda "explore the field, complete a dungeon, return to the field" game flow. And if the silver lady standing beside Link in the game's only official artwork isn't his sword somehow come to life, we'll kiss an Octorok.

We hope to find out more at E3, but whether the next Zelda makes it out this year or next, it seems certain that we've got something very special to look forward to. **—CHRIS SL.**

(*TENTATIVE TITLE)

Wii VITALITY SENSOR

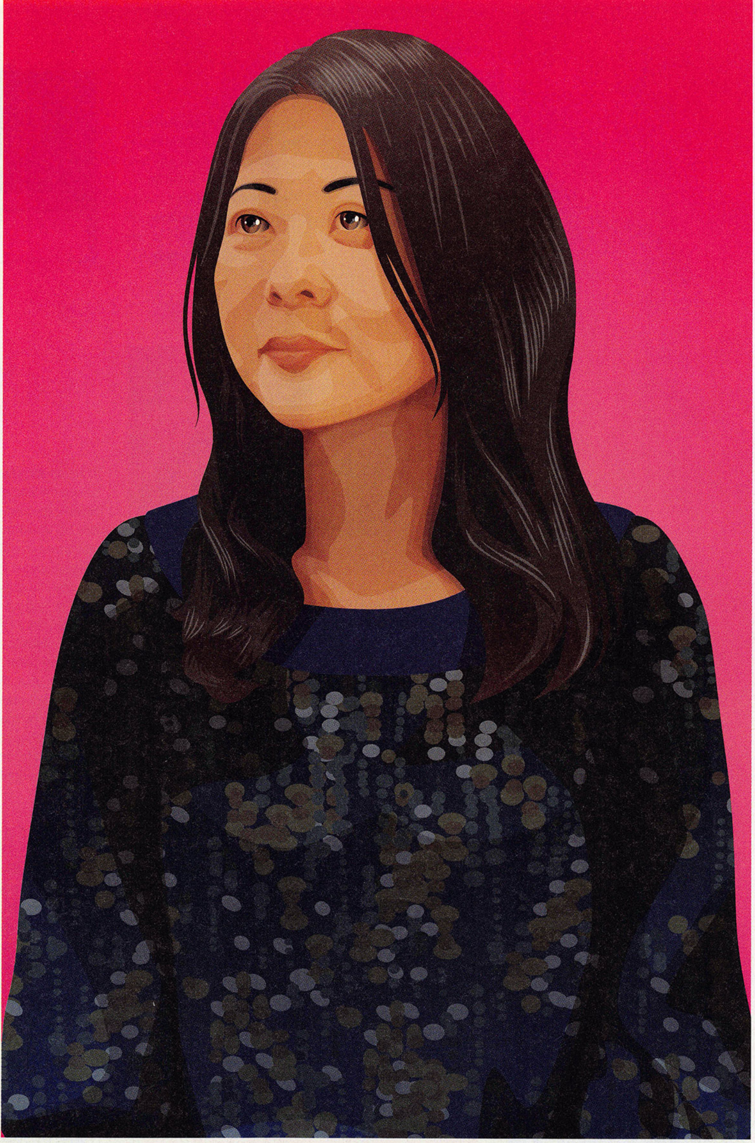
Just what will the Wii Vitality Sensor do? We haven't heard a peep about the wild new peripheral since its E3 tease last June, and our imaginations have gone into overdrive. Will it teach us to meditate? Show us how scared we get? Reveal our "Vitality Age?" We really have no idea, but we're pretty darn curious to put our finger into it—and that's not something we can say often. **—CHRIS SL.**

DRAGON QUEST IX

In Japan last year, Dragon Quest IX shook up the legendary RPG series' staid image by removing random encounters and adding customizable characters, wireless multiplayer, and weekly downloadable quests. Japanese consumers showed their approval by snapping up over 4 million copies of the title so far. Hopefully our turn will come soon. **—CASEY L.**

36

Power Profiles



DATE OF BIRTH
May 25

BIRTHPLACE
Yokusaka, Kanagawa, Japan

POSITION
Producer, CS#3, Sega

BEST KNOWN FOR
Being the "First Lady of RPGs"

FAVORITE FOOD
Cailler chocolate, onion soup, fruit

CURRENT PROJECTS
Classified. Sorry!

Rieko Kodama

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

Rieko Kodama joined Sega fresh out of an advertising trade school in 1984, and ended up in the art department just as the company was breaking big in the home-console business. Drawing pixel art for dozens of projects per year, Kodama had a hand in many of the company's early successes, from arcade smashes like Quartet to early Master System classics such as Alex Kidd in Miracle World, and even the Genesis's legendary Sonic the Hedgehog. But Kodama made her biggest splash as a design lead for the Master System RPG Phantasy Star. Although she had a lesser role in the two sequels that followed, she returned to the series as the director of its legendary final installment, Phantasy Star IV: The End of the Millennium. A rare female director in an industry dominated by men, Kodama continued to rise at Sega, eventually making an impactful debut as a producer (a title she holds still) with the Dreamcast classic Skies of Arcadia.

NINTENDO POWER
How did you first become involved in the game industry?
RIEKO KODAMA
I studied advertising design at school, but I wanted to create things rather than advertising somebody else's products. The game industry was very new, and I felt it had a lot of potential for growth. I applied for a job as an artist at Sega and got it.

What did you want to be when you grew up?
I planned to be excavating lost ruins as an archaeologist in Egypt.

What aspect of creating a video game do you enjoy the most?
I enjoy being able to be involved in every aspect of the games I develop—making rules, stories, world settings, characters, promotion plans, etc.... I also love the camaraderie that forms within development teams, and the ability to reach out and communicate with players all over the world through my games.

Now that you're primarily in a leadership role at Sega, do you ever miss doing artwork? Have you done any art for your recent projects?
Nothing I've drawn recently has made it directly into a game, but I was able to introduce the team working on 7th Dragon to techniques that I myself used to employ as a dot-pixel artist. Though I no longer draw for games, I still work on art in my personal time. In addition to painting, I also do some handcrafts and make accessories.

We've heard that you're a big fan of the Dungeons & Dragons tabletop role-playing game. How has that affected your view of game design?
I'm am indeed a fan of D&D—I love Raistlin [from the Dragonlance series]! I played the table-top role-playing game, and also read the novels. I particularly loved the personalities and designs of the dragons; there were scary dragons and smart dragons—it was all so different from the image of dragons we grow up with in Japan. That really peaked my interest. And it isn't just D&D; I think the fantasy and sci-fi worlds in other tabletop RPGs, novels, and movies have had a very powerful influence on me. I suppose the first western dragon I saw was in Disney's *Sleeping Beauty*.

What were some of the other influences for the original Phantasy Star? It was so unusual to see science-fiction motifs, female protagonists, and first-person perspectives in the games of that era.
At that time, the Dragon Quest series was dominating Japan. We started the project because we wanted to make a new RPG that felt very different from the Dragon Quest games. Some of the elements in Phantasy Star were inspired by PC games; first-person view in 3-D dungeons, big cut-in illustrations, and so on. But I don't think there was any specific influence for the female character.

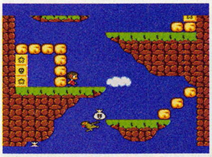
Much of my design work in the game was influenced by *Star Wars*, which is one of my favorite movies. Aspects of *Star Wars*, such as the costumes, were designed with a strong Asian flair. Conversely, I decided to experiment with giving the costumes and designs of Phantasy Star a more western motif. At the time, we had no plans to release the game in western markets, so these designs were purely intended to intrigue Japanese players.

The Phantasy Star series dealt with some very dark and tragic material. In the years since, why do you think Japanese RPGs have tended to shy away from heavier topics?
I think a lot of Japanese games have some pretty heavy stuff in their backstories and heroes' motivations. But as you say, they do tend to steer clear of real-world social issues. It may be partly because game developers are not looking to send any kind of message or make any specific statement through their games, or perhaps that the players simply wouldn't be interested in that. Another reason may be that since Japanese RPGs have started being sold worldwide, Japanese cultural themes and concerns may not be appreciated or understood by international audiences. I think this makes developers reluctant to push their own ideals onto their games.

Besides the Phantasy Star series, you worked on dozens of other games in the Master System and Genesis eras. Which ones stand out as your favorites?
Quartet was a game that I was deeply involved in because I worked on both the arcade and Master System versions. But my favorite is still the Phantasy Star series. Another one I really liked was Alex Kidd in Miracle

GAMEOGRAPHY

In the early days of Sega, Rieko Kodama worked on more games than she can remember. She's had larger roles in fewer games since trading her pixel-art tablet for a producer's clipboard.



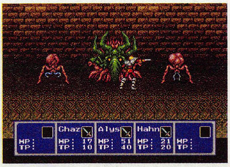
ALEX KIDD IN MIRACLE WORLD
1986, SEGA MASTER SYSTEM
DESIGNER

1UP
1400
Pow
8980
MARY
TOP
20000
YAS
2UP

QUARTET
1986, ARCADE
DESIGNER

THE CAMINEET
RESIDENTIAL AREA

PHANTASY STAR
1987, SEGA MASTER SYSTEM
EXECUTIVE DESIGNER



PHANTASY STAR IV: THE END OF THE MILLENNIUM
1995, SEGA GENESIS
DIRECTOR, FIELD GRAPHIC DESIGN, OBJECT DESIGN, VISUAL EVENT GRAPHICS, BATTLE BACKGROUND DESIGN

World. That game was aimed at children, so it didn't feature a lot of direct combat, but I'm really happy with how it worked as a kids' game. It makes me so happy when I get emails from fans who say they grew up playing Alex Kidd with their families.

How did it feel to return to the Phantasy Star series as the director of Phantasy Star IV after having a less hands-on role in some of the previous installments?
I had been asked to come up with a pitch for a new RPG, so I decided I wanted to make Phantasy Star IV, and pitched that. The development team ended up being a mix of creators who had worked on past Phantasy Star titles, and more recent recruits who had grown up playing the series before they joined the company. It really blew me away to realize how much time had passed since we made the original Phantasy Star. I'd been making games for so long that my fans had become my co-workers, and now we would be making the next game together.

Why was there never a Phantasy Star V? It seems to have been a popular and successful series. Was there ever a point at which a sequel was in the design stages?
Actually, when IV was finished, we did talk about what the story of Phantasy Star V would be if we ever made it. It was more of a rough concept than a detailed story. We were discussing things like, "Is Dark Force really evil?" "Are there gods in the Phantasy Star universe?" "What is the Light Force in the world that opposes Dark Force? Is it justice?" If we had made a Phantasy Star V, I think we would have tried to tie up the entire series, the whole Phantasy Star universe.

Skies of Arcadia felt like a bit of a throwback to the RPGs of the 16-bit era. Was that something you had in mind when you started the project?
I certainly wouldn't say that was our intention, but as I recall, we were all feeling something of a backlash against the CG-movie-packed games that were in style at the time. It was very important to us that the player feel in control of the characters, instead of having the game suddenly switch to CG movies all the time.

We imagine you've been bombarded with questions from passionate Phantasy Star and Skies of Arcadia fans throughout your career (us included). Are there any works in other forms of media for which you have a similar level of passion?
In recent years, I've really found a passion for professional sports, particularly soccer, tennis, and figure skating. I love to see the moment when someone pushes past the boundaries of their body and spirit. Of course I go to see live matches, but I also enjoy watching sports from all over the world online.

> *"I'd been making games for so long that my fans had become my co-workers, and now we would be making the next game together."*

How did it feel to return to the RPG genre after so many years with 7th Dragon? Were you satisfied with the way that project turned out?
When I met the project's director, Mr. Kazuya Niino from ImageEpoch [who directed Etrian Odyssey and Trauma Center: Under the Knife for Atlus], he inspired me to make one more RPG. It really is fun to make RPGs. As for the second part of the question, this isn't limited to 7th Dragon, but I've never been 100% satisfied with any project I've worked on, and I doubt I ever will be.

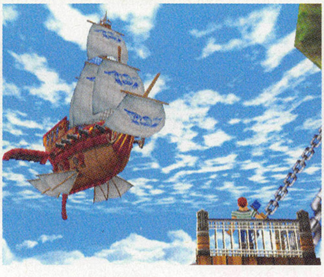
In the last 25 years, a great deal has changed in the way games are made. What changes do you consider most positive? What changes do you most lament?
The most positive change has been the evolution in hardware. We can do now what we could only dream of 25 years ago. What I lament is the way people talk about games as if they lead to criminal behavior, and I lament the existence of certain games that make this notion so prevalent. I'm also very concerned about the piracy in the game industry. If piracy continues to grow, we won't be able to afford to develop new games any longer.

What are your thoughts on the recent boom of software targeted toward women?
I think we're seeing more female gamers in Japan for several reasons. Women who have grown up around video games are much less resistant to the idea of buying them. There are more "female-themed" games available in the market, centering around cooking, fashion, and so on. Finally, people are beginning to perceive game machines as being handy tools for real life that offer more than just games. I think the opportunities to get game machines into the hands of women has increased dramatically, and that we as game creators should focus more on making games with elements that are appealing to women.

Finally, if you could have one superpower, what would it be and why?
You know, I've never really wanted a superpower... [Laughs]. I'm satisfied with the way I am.

GAMEOGRAPHY

MAGIC KNIGHT RAYEARTH
1998, SEGA SATURN
DIRECTOR



SKIES OF ARCADIA: LEGENDS
2003, GAMECUBE
PRODUCER

7TH DRAGON
2009, NINTENDO DS [JAPAN ONLY]
PRODUCER

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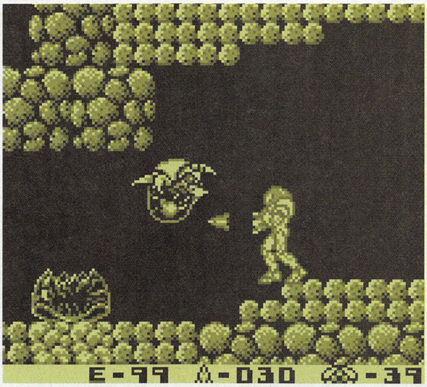
I'm bringing the big-shoulder look back.

Metroid II: Return of Samus

Samus Aran: Working toward planned extinction since 20X5.

Nintendo
GAME BOY
METROID II
RETURN OF SAMUS
Nintendo

PLATFORM: **GAME BOY**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO**
RELEASE DATE: **NOVEMBER 1991**
COVERED IN ISSUES: **31, 34, 37, 92**
METROIDS ON SR388: **39**



Samus's first rule of Metroid hunting: first we crack the shell, then we crack the nuts inside!

Like Jan Brady and Lisa Simpson, Metroid II: Return of Samus suffers from middle-child syndrome. It had neither the fresh innovation of its predecessor nor the elaborate, 16-bit shine of its sequel, and therefore it's often overlooked when discussing the popular franchise. Perhaps part of the reason for its relative obscurity is that it deviates a bit from the traditional Metroid formula.

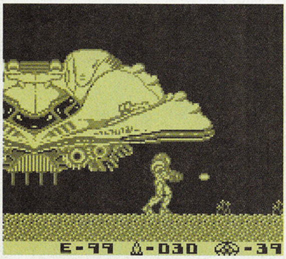
Although the core gameplay is similar to that of the other entries in the series, Metroid II doesn't rely on Samus accessing new areas by means of a newly discovered power-up. In fact, one could conceivably refer to the game's layout as linear, something Metroid is known for *not* being. Additionally, the goal is different in this game than in the others: instead of simply working toward a final battle with Mother Brain, Samus's mission here is a bit more intricate.

After Samus deals with the energy-draining Metroids on planet Zebes in the original game, the Galactic Federation sends her to the creatures' homeworld, SR388, to wipe out the entire species. An onscreen counter gives the player a constant tally of how many of the parasitic beasts remain on the planet.

The most interesting plot element introduced in Metroid II is that the Metroids' life cycle includes a series of bizarre transformations. The further you advance in the game, the more fearsome and powerful the evolved Metroids become. These new forms culminate in a battle against the dreaded Queen Metroid at the end of the adventure.

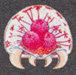
New monsters weren't the only contributions Metroid II made to the series. This was the first time Samus's Varia Suit featured its trademark spherical shoulders, and the game introduced valuable items like the Plasma Beam and the Spider Ball upgrade to Samus's Morph Ball mode. Of course, the game's conclusion also served to segue into the events of Super Metroid: Samus met the baby Metroid that played an important role in the Super NES sequel.

Return of Samus may not be the Metroid that you're used to, but it's a worthy entry in the series. Track down this oft-neglected chapter in Samus's history and see for yourself. **—PHIL T.**

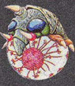


EVILUTION

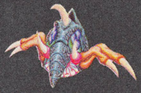
The Metroids in Return of Samus go through four stages of metamorphosis. You probably wouldn't want to tangle with any of these beasties.



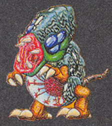
METROID You've seen plenty of these unevolved guys before. Energy-sucking, floating jellyfish—you know the drill.



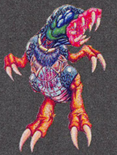
ALPHA METROID This form has grown a hard shell and is beginning to sprout limbs.



GAMMA METROID The limbs have fully formed, and the creature gains a powerful electric attack.



ZETA METROID The now-bipedal Metroid is faster, and capable of spitting a corrosive substance.



OMEGA METROID This large form is relatively slow, but incredibly powerful.

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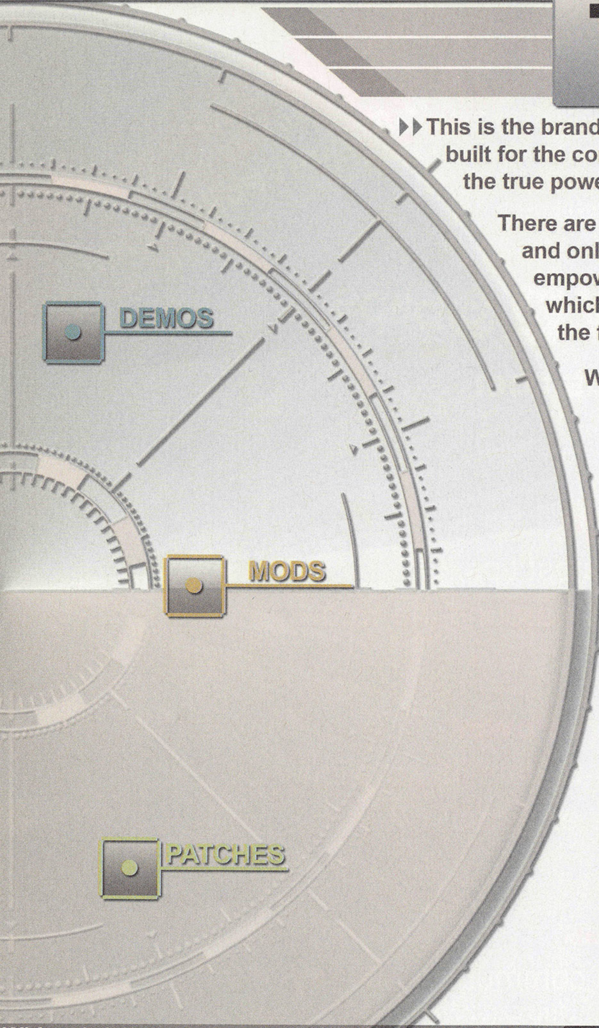

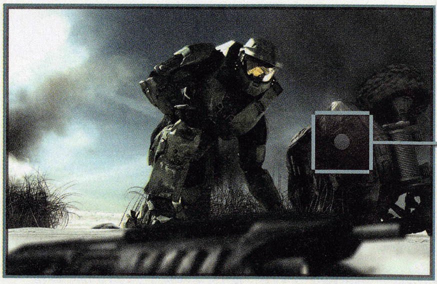

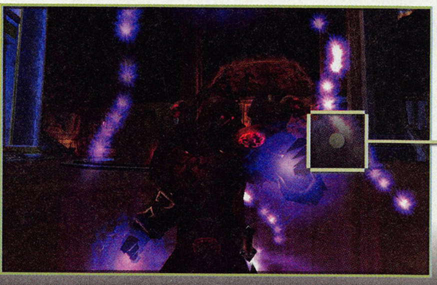

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.GAME LINKS.EVOLVED

REVIEWS

IN-DEPTH REVIEWS OF ALL THE LATEST GAMES

IN THIS SECTION

Wii REVIEWS

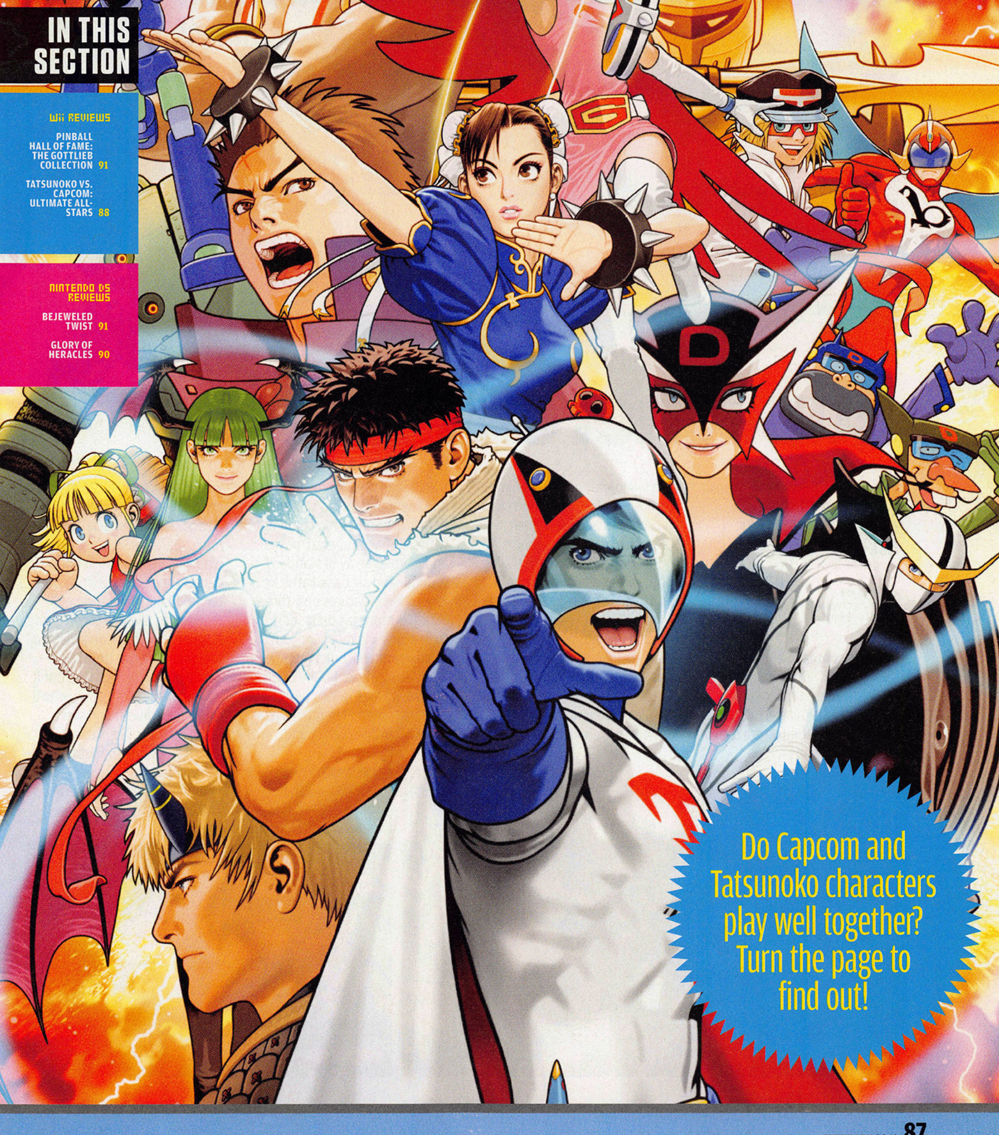
PINBALL HALL OF FAME: THE GOTTLIEB COLLECTION 91

TATSUNOKO VS. CAPCOM: ULTIMATE ALL-STARS 88

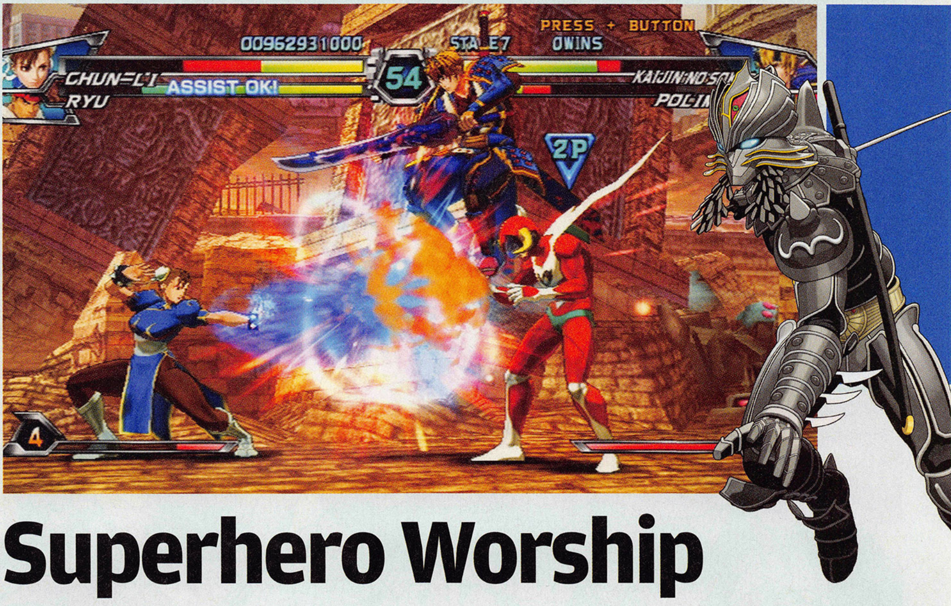
NINTENDO DS REVIEWS

BEJEWELED TWIST 91

GLORY OF HERACLES 90



Do Capcom and Tatsunoko characters play well together? Turn the page to find out!


PRESS + BUTTON
00962931000
STAGE7
0WINS
CHUN-LI
RYU
ASSIST OK!
54
KAIJIN NO SO
POLI
2P
4

Superhero Worship

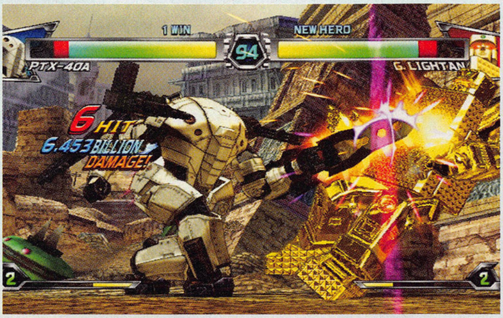
TATSUNOKO VS. CAPCOM: ULTIMATE ALL-STARS

RATING: 9.0

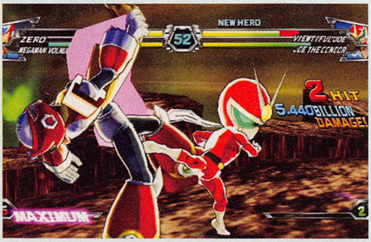
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**
DEVELOPER: **EIGHTING**
ESRB: **TEEN**

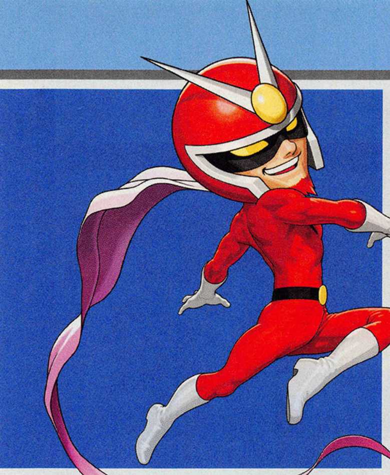
When it comes to its gameplay, Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars doesn't do anything halfway. Everything is full bore, nonstop, over-the-top crazy in this video-game-meets-anime explosion. Characters don't just rely on fists and feet; expect laser beams, swords, spears, missiles, pistols, brooms, drills, baseball bats, bombs, and giant robots—lots of giant robots. Even simple combos result in billions of points of damage unleashed upon your opponent. But this two-on-two tag-team-fighting extravaganza isn't just about in-your-face mayhem; it's built around the traditional, precise, responsive battling that Capcom's fighting games are known for, complete with skill-based special moves and a broad array of standard ground- and air-based attacks. The combat features only three attack buttons (as opposed to four or six in most Capcom fighting games), but it feels perfectly natural, especially when playing with a Classic Controller.

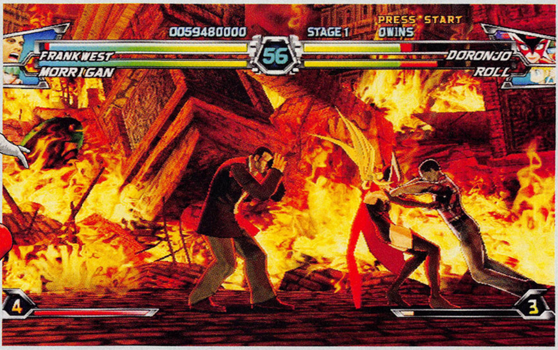
There's a lot of depth here, too. Enthusiasts can spend weeks mastering all 26 playable characters, learning the intricacies of chaining special moves into superattacks, determining when it's best to call in your partner for an assist or a counter, and taking advantage of techniques like Advanced Guard (for knocking back an attacking foe) and Baroque (for ridiculously powerful combos). But if you're the kind of gamer who'd rather just dive in and start firing off lots of impressive attacks without any subtlety, you can do that, as well. Thanks to numerous difficulty settings and a newcomer-friendly con-


1 WIN
NEW HERO
94
PTX-40A
G. LIGHTAN
6 HIT
6.453 BILLION
DAMAGE!
2
2

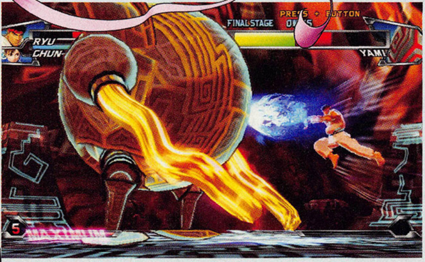
[Below] Zero's sword is no match for Viewtiful Joe's groin kick!


NEW HERO
ZERO
MEGAMAN VOLNUT
52
VIEWTIFUL JOE
JOE THE CONDOR
2 HIT
5.440 BILLION
DAMAGE!
MAXIMUM





Nothing makes for a better photo opportunity than a zombie attack during a blazing inferno.

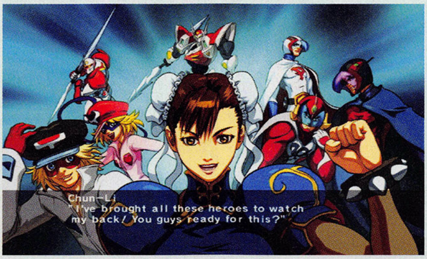


figuration with the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers (complete with one-button special moves), anybody can jump in and start having a blast.

As good as the action is, the cast of characters is clearly the star of the show. If you're even remotely a fan of Capcom video games or the anime of Tatsunoko Production, there's something here for you. The Capcom side is full of recognizable faces that span the company's library nicely; you'll find heroes from the Street Fighter games, Darkstalkers, the Mega Man franchise, Dead Rising, Rival Schools: United by Fate, Onimusha, Viewtiful Joe, and beyond. The Tatsunoko warriors might not be quite as well known on this side of the Pacific, but once you've spent some time controlling the likes of Casshan, Karas, Yatterman-1, Ippatsuman, Tekkaman, Polimar, and the members of Science Ninja Team Gatchaman, you'll likely have a lot of respect for their abilities and their classic designs, regardless of if you've ever watched their TV shows. The character roster is diverse if not perfectly balanced (a couple of characters feel cheap), and the developers have even thrown in some gargantuan powerhouse fighters (who have to fight solo) for good measure.

No matter who you bring into battle, you'll be in for a graphical treat. This is a seriously good-looking game—further evidence of just how slick third-party Wii titles can look when the developers put in the proper effort. The characters and backgrounds (which are also inspired by Tatsunoko and Capcom properties) are bursting with detail, and virtually every move is accompanied by snazzy special effects. There are some exceptions—the Orbital Ring Systems Cargo Bay background looks pretty chunky and bland, and some of the character textures don't look so hot in close-ups—but such instances are few.

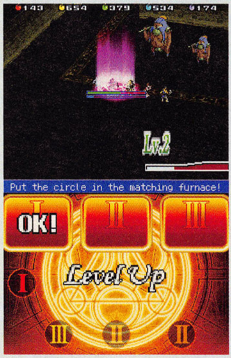
One complaint that I do have about the game, however, is that it doesn't have all the content that was featured in the original Japanese release (Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Cross Generation of Heroes). Most of the minigames have been removed, and the fully animated character-specific endings are gone. The new endings—illustrated by the folks at Udon Entertainment, makers of the Street Fighter comic book—are pretty cool in their own right, but they just aren't as impressive a reward as a mini cartoon.



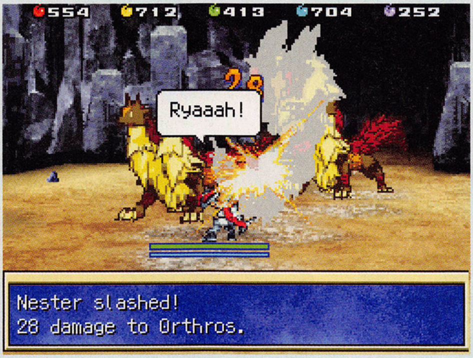
Chun-Li
"I've brought all these heroes to watch my back! You guys ready for this?"

On the other hand, it's not like North American players are getting shortchanged. This version does add several features, including five new characters (Zero, Frank West, and Tekkaman Blade are especially cool), and—just as important—online play. Our Wi-Fi experience was impressively smooth, and it was easy to jump online and find a match. Hopefully it's just as good once thousands of players are logging onto the servers to compete. At the very least, though, Capcom has implemented robust online options, including ranked and unranked bouts; matches with friends, rivals, or strangers from around the world; and leaderboards in a variety of categories.

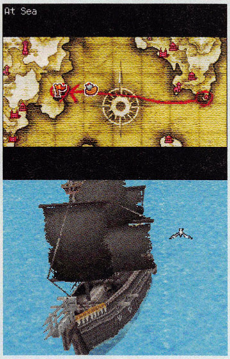
A year ago it didn't look like there was any chance that Tatsunoko vs. Capcom would ever be released stateside. Now it's not only here, but it's one of the best fighting games on Wii—or any other current-gen console. If you have any interest in fighting games (or anime) you don't want to miss out on this one. —**CHRIS H.**



Put the circle in the matching furnace!



Nester slashed!
28 damage to Orthros.



A Not-Quite-Legendary Journey

GLORY OF HERACLES

RATING: 7.0

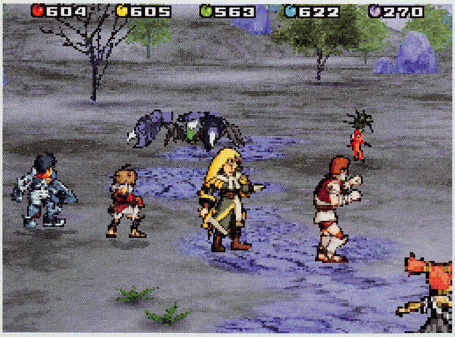
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **PAON**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

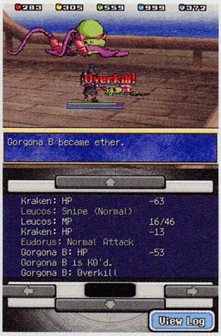
As someone who grew up enthralled by Greek mythology, I had an immediate interest in Glory of Heracles. Heck, the fact that the title uses the hero's original Greek name Heracles instead of the more commonly known Roman name Hercules was a good sign as far as I was concerned. But despite its atypical ancient-Greek setting, Glory of Heracles is largely a typical RPG.

The reason I have to qualify that statement with the word *largely* is because while Glory of Heracles is quite conventional overall, it's not entirely cookie-cutter; the game does add its own little touches to the usual RPG tropes. The battles, for instance, are random and turn-based, as they are in many RPGs. But instead of selecting an attack and having a character execute it immediately, you have to select the actions of your entire party before the round will play out. This means you always have to think a few moves ahead, adding another layer of strategy. (Adding even more are the stylus-controlled minigames you can play to enhance your offensive magic and skills, and the need to manage element points in order to use certain magic.) Of course, choosing all of your party's actions at one time can mean you attack an already-downed opponent, which can be annoying when you'd rather attack some of your other foes instead. (Fortunately, you get an MP bonus for performing this Overkill maneuver.)

The characters themselves are pretty much what you would expect from an RPG. Multitudinous games in the genre feature a silent amnesiac protagonist, a big dumb strong guy, or a good-looking swordsman. But Glory of Heracles adds its own twist to the formula by making you question the gender of one of the characters (though it's pretty obvious as to which gender s/he is; virtually no one is fooled) and making most of your party amnesiacs. It's because of this latter point that I found myself becoming somewhat invested in the characters, as clichéd as they are; I wanted to unveil the mysteries of their pasts. This to me was more of a hook than the main story itself (surprise—only your party can save the world from total destruction!), and it helped me stay interested throughout the 30-hour (not accounting for side quests) adventure. The good dialogue has a lot to do with it, and the references to other Nintendo games are especially nice treats. The writing also helps compensate for the visuals. The character models—while well-animated for the most part (in battles, anyway)—are quite pixelated, and the environments can look very samey.

It's this feeling of sameness that permeates Glory of Heracles, preventing it from being truly great. Granted, the battle system, the characters, and the setting are all a bit different from the norm. Unfortunately, none of these can offset the been-there-done-that feeling of the game as a whole. Though Glory of Heracles may not be revolutionary, however, it's still ultimately solid fun. **—JUSTIN C.**





Gorgona B became ether.

```
Kraken: HP              -63
Leucos: Snipe (Normal)
Leucos: MP              16/46
Kraken: HP              -13
Eudorus: Normal Attack
Gorgona B: HP           -53
Gorgona B is KO'd.
Gorgona B: Overkill
```

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE GAME COMPANIES MAKE IN 2010?

Justin Cheng

I would like to see certain publishers scale back on the plastic peripherals. I don't have any more space in my house!

Chris Hoffman

I want publishers to bring us more meaty DSiWare games in 2010. WayForward's Shantae looks like a good start; I want to see what everybody else can do.

Nathan Meunier

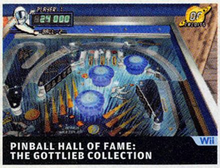
More publishers should resolve to support indie developers and take a chance on smaller games.

Chris Slate

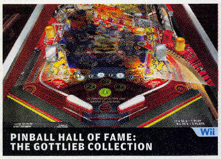
I'd like to see many more games support the Wii MotionPlus accessory. In March, Red Steel 2 should show everyone how much cooler the peripheral can make an action game—and I can't wait to see exactly how it's used in the next Zelda for Wii—but I want more!

Steve Thomason

Games like MadWorld, Red Steel 2, and NBA Jam prove that you can make a great-looking Wii title if you get a bit creative with the visual style. More developers need to take that approach.



PINBALL HALL OF FAME: THE GOTTLIEB COLLECTION



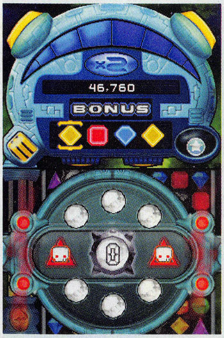
PINBALL HALL OF FAME: THE GOTTLIEB COLLECTION

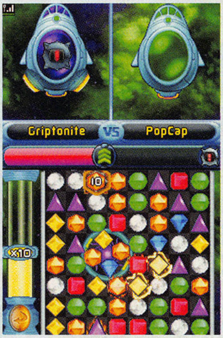
PINBALL HALL OF FAME: THE GOTTLIEB COLLECTION

RATING: **6.5**

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **CRAVE**
DEVELOPER: **FARSIGHT STUDIOS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Pinball Hall of Fame: The Gottlieb Collection delivers a solid, authentic re-creation of more than 10 real-life pinball machines from the last several decades. The physics are spot-on, the arcade-style presentation is nice, and the Gottlieb Challenge mode (in which you play through the tables in sequence) provides a nifty way to play. The problem is that some of the included games just aren't that exciting; in fact, unless you're a die-hard pinball fanatic, you've probably never heard of many of them. Maybe games such as Play-Boy, Ace High, and Central Park were fun when they came out (back in 1932, 1957, and 1966, respectively), but despite their historical significance, they aren't terribly enjoyable now. Fortunately, some of the more modern games hold up well and are fun to play; golf-themed Tee'd Off and racing-themed Victory are probably the best of the lot, with complex, interesting tables and attainable goals, while Goin' Nuts (an unreleased game with an emphasis on multiball play) and Black Hole (featuring a dual-level playfield) provide very cool, unique experiences. Ultimately, how big of a pinball fan you are will determine how much enjoyment you get out of this title. —**CHRIS H.**





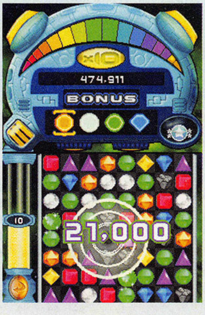
Spin Cycle

BEJEWELED TWIST

RATING: **8.5**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **POPCAP GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **GRIPTONITE GAMES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

The latest PopCap game to make the leap from PC to the DS puts a new spin on the maddeningly addictive gem-matching formula. In Bejeweled Twist you clear colorful gems by rotating groups of four at a time clockwise with a simple tap of the stylus. Though it takes a minute or so to get the hang of this unique approach to the classic match-three gameplay, the twisting mechanic is a really cool way to play. It forces you to look at the puzzle board in a very different way and freshens up the experience in the process.



Every sequence you match adds to a meter that, when filled, triggers the next level. Matching more than three gems at a time creates explosive Fire and Lightning gems that can clear debris that accumulates on the playing field. There's no time limit in Classic mode, so the main challenge there comes in the form of Bomb gems that appear at regular intervals. These have to be cleared before they tick down to zero. Then there are the even shorter-fused Doom gems that can be defused only with fire or lightning blasts. Ignoring one of those bad boys spells Armageddon.

Additional modes, such as the speed-intensive Blitz mode and the bombless Zen mode, are rounded out by intense special challenges and entertaining two-player battles. Every time you play you'll boost your overall rank, which is how you unlock most of the extra content. To put it plainly, Bejeweled Twist is a perfect pick for pocket puzzling. —**NATHAN M.**

REVIEWS ARCHIVE

THE COMPLETE LIST OF NINTENDO POWER REVIEWS FROM THE PAST YEAR

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS

Wii

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Academy of Champions: Soccer	6.5	Ubisoft	248	E
Astro Boy: The Video Game	7.5	D3Publisher	248	E10+
Avatar: The Game	5.0	Ubisoft	250	T
The Beatles: Rock Band	9.0	MTV Games	247	T
The Bigs 2	6.0	2K Sports	244	E10+
Boom Blox Bash Party	8.0	Electronic Arts	243	E
A Boy and His Blob	8.5	Majesco	247	E
Broken Sword: Shadow of the Templars—The Director's Cut	7.0	Ubisoft	241	T
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare: Reflex	9.0	Activision	249	M
The Conduit	8.0	Sega	243	T
Cursed Mountain	7.0	Deep Silver	246	M
Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party 3	6.5	Konami	248	E10+
Dead Space Extraction	8.0	Electronic Arts	247	M
Deadly Creatures	7.5	THQ	239	T
Destiny of Zorro	2.5	505	243	E10+
DiRT 2	4.5	Codemasters	247	E10+
DJ Hero	8.5	Activision	249	T
Don King Boxing	5.5	2K Sports	241	T
Dragon Ball: Revenge of King Piccolo	6.5	Namco Bandai	248	E10+
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	7.0	THQ	248	E
Excitebots: Trick Racing	8.0	Nintendo	241	E
Family Fun Football	4.5	Tecmo	247	E
FIFA Soccer 10	6.0	Electronic Arts	248	E
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers	8.0	Square Enix	250	T
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Echoes of Time	6.0	Square Enix	240	E10+
Fishing Master: World Tour	7.5	Hudson	238	E
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	7.5	Atari	243	E10+
G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra	5.0	Electronic Arts	246	T
Grand Slam Tennis	7.5	Electronic Arts	243	E
Guilty Gear XX Accent Core Plus	7.5	Aksys	241	T
Guitar Hero 5	8.0	Activision	247	T
Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince	5.5	Electronic Arts	244	E10+
Harvest Moon: Animal Parade	7.5	Natsume	248	E
Help Wanted	4.5	Hudson	242	E10+
The House of the Dead: Overkill	8.0	Sega	239	M
Indiana Jones and the Staff of Kings	7.5	LucasArts	243	T
Jambo! Safari	3.5	Sega	250	E
Ju-On: The Grudge	6.0	XSEED	247	M
Karaoke Revolution	6.0	Konami	248	T
Klonoa	9.0	Namco Bandai	241	E10+
LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	6.5	LucasArts	249	E10+
LEGO Rock Band	8.0	Warner Bros.	249	E10+
Let's Tap	7.0	Sega	243	E
Little King's Story	9.0	XSEED	244	T
Madden NFL 10	8.0	Electronic Arts	245	E
MadWorld	9.0	Sega	240	M
Major League Baseball 2K9	6.0	2K Sports	240	E
Major Minor's Majestic March	6.0	Majesco	241	E
Marble Saga: Kororinpa	7.5	Hudson	240	E
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	7.0	Sega	247	E
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	5.5	Activision	248	T
Mini Ninjas	7.5	Eidos	247	E10+
MotoGP	4.0	Capcom	240	E
The Munchables	7.0	Namco Bandai	243	E
Muramasa: The Demon Blade	8.0	Ignition	246	T
MySims Agents	7.0	Electronic Arts	247	E
MySims Party	5.0	Electronic Arts	240	E
Naruto Shippuden: Clash of Ninja Revolution 3	7.5	Tomy	249	T
NASCAR Kart Racing	6.0	EA Sports	238	E
NBA 2K10	6.0	2K Sports	247	E
Need for Speed Nitro	7.0	Electronic Arts	249	E10+
New Super Mario Bros. Wii	9.0	Nintendo	249	E
NHL 2K10	8.0	2K Sports	246	E10+
Onechanbara: Bikini Zombie Slayers	6.5	D3Publisher	240	M
Overlord: Dark Legend	7.0	Codemasters	244	T
Phantom Brave: We Meet Again	8.0	NIS America	243	T
Pro Evolution Soccer 2010	8.0	Konami	250	E
Punch-Out!!	8.5	Nintendo	242	E10+
Rabbids Go Home	7.0	Ubisoft	249	E10+
Ready 2 Rumble Revolution	5.0	Atari	240	T
Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles	8.0	Capcom	249	M
Rune Factory Frontier	7.5	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	E10+
Shaun White Snowboarding: World Stage	7.0	Ubisoft	249	E
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	8.0	Konami	249	M
SimAnimals Africa	5.0	Electronic Arts	248	E
The Sky Crawlers: Innocent Aces	7.0	XSEED	250	T
Sonic and the Black Knight	8.0	Sega	239	E10+
Spectrobes: Origins	5.5	Disney	246	E10+
Spore Hero	7.0	Electronic Arts	247	E10+
Spyborgs	7.5	Capcom	247	T
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes	5.0	LucasArts	249	T
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Smash-Up	7.5	Ubisoft	247	E10+
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	7.0	Ubisoft	238	M
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	9.0	Electronic Arts	243	E
Tornado Outbreak	6.5	Konami	247	E10+
Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen	5.5	Activision	245	T
Up	6.5	THQ	242	E
Valhalla Knights: Eldar Saga	4.0	XSEED	246	T

MORE ON:

NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. Wii

Shocker: New Super Mario Bros. Wii is really good. I knew that from the time I spent playing it with the rest of the NP crew, but it was even more fun when I sat down with my friends over the holidays and played it at a more leisurely pace. There were definitely times when the co-op action was a hindrance, but even when we were accidentally knocking each other into lava, the game was laugh-out-loud fun. And guys, sorry I had to leave you behind in Iggy's castle, but the fate of the Mushroom Kingdom was at stake. —CHRIS H.

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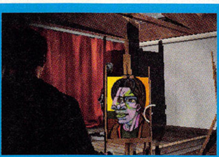
MORE ON:

SILENT HILL: SHATTERED MEMORIES



If you go into Shattered Memories demanding a traditional Silent Hill experience, you'll likely be disappointed. But taken on its own, the game is an immersive, poignant, and worthwhile adventure for adult gamers. —STEVE T.

MORE ON:

TONY HAWK: RIDE

In theory, a skateboarding game that is controlled using a skateboardlike peripheral is a neat idea. Unfortunately, playing Tony Hawk: Ride can be a rather frustrating experience, which is mainly due to the imprecision of the input device. —JUSTIN C.

Virtua Tennis 2009	**7.0**	Sega	244	E
We Ski and Snowboard	**6.5**	Namco Bandai	239	E
Wii Sports Resort	**8.5**	Nintendo	245	E
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010	**7.5**	THQ	248	T
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	**5.0**	Activision	243	T

Nintendo DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Ant Nation	**2.0**	Konami	245	E
Assassin's Creed II: Discovery	**7.0**	Ubisoft	250	T
Atelier Annie: Alchemists of Sera Island	**8.0**	NIS America	248	E10+
Avalon Code	**8.5**	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	E10+
Avatar: The Game	**5.0**	Ubisoft	250	E10+
Black Sigil: Blade of the Exiled	**5.0**	Graffiti	242	E
Bleach: The 3rd Phantom	**4.0**	Sega	246	T
Blue Dragon Plus	**8.0**	Ignition	239	E
Boing! Docomodake DS	**7.0**	Ignition	239	E
Bookworm DS	**8.5**	PopCap	249	E
The Chase: Felix Meets Felicity	**5.0**	Atari	238	E
Cooking Mama 3: Shop & Chop	**6.0**	Majesco	248	E
C.O.P. The Recruit	**4.0**	Ubisoft	249	T
C.O.R.E.	**5.5**	Graffiti	242	M
The Dark Spire	**5.0**	Atlus	241	E10+
Dawn of Discovery	**8.5**	Ubisoft	244	E
Dokapon Journey	**4.0**	Atlus	241	E10+
Dragon Ball Z: Attack of the Saiyans	**8.0**	Namco Bandai	248	E10+
Dragon Quest V: Hand of the Heavenly Bride	**8.5**	Square Enix	239	E
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	**8.0**	THQ	248	E
Fighting Fantasy: The Warlock of Firetop Mountain	**4.0**	Aspyr	248	T
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Echoes of Time	**6.5**	Square Enix	240	E10+
Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon	**8.5**	Nintendo	239	E10+
Flower, Sun, and Rain	**6.0**	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	T
Fossil Fighters	**8.0**	Nintendo	246	E
Gardening Mama	**8.0**	Majesco	240	E
G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra	**5.0**	Electronic Arts	245	E10+
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	**9.0**	Rockstar	241	M
Guitar Hero On Tour: Modern Hits	**7.0**	Activision	244	E10+
Harvest Moon: Frantic Farming	**8.0**	Natsume	243	E
Harvest Moon: Sunshine Islands	**7.0**	Natsume	248	E
Henry Hatsworth in the Puzzling Adventure	**8.0**	Electronic Arts	240	E
Hero's Saga: Laevatein Tactics	**7.0**	Aksys	247	T
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey	**4.0**	505	246	E10+
Jake Hunter Detective Story: Memories of the Past	**6.0**	Aksys	242	T
Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days	**9.0**	Square Enix	247	E10+
Knights in the Nightmare	**8.0**	Atlus	243	T
Legacy of Ys: Books I & II	**7.5**	Atlus	238	T
The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks	**9.5**	Nintendo	250	E10+
The Legendary Starfy	**7.0**	Nintendo	243	E
LEGO Battles	**5.0**	Warner Bros.	243	E
LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	**5.0**	LucasArts	249	E10+
The Lord of the Rings: Conquest	**5.0**	Electronic Arts	238	E10+
Lux-Pain	**4.0**	Ignition	240	T
Magician's Quest: Mysterious Times	**7.5**	Konami	242	E10+
Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story	**9.5**	Nintendo	246	E
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	**8.0**	Sega	247	E
Mega Man Star Force 3: Red Joker/Black Ace	**6.0**	Capcom	244	E
Miami Law	**3.0**	Hudson	243	T
Might & Magic: Clash of Heroes	**8.5**	Ubisoft	247	E10+
Mini Ninjas	**6.0**	Eidos	247	E10+
My World, My Way	**7.0**	Atlus	239	E
Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Council 4	**5.0**	Tomy	243	E10+
Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Destiny 2	**7.0**	Tomy	247	T
Nostalgia	**7.0**	Ignition	248	E10+
Overlord Minions	**7.0**	Codemasters	244	E10+
Peggle Dual Shot	**8.5**	PopCap	240	E
Phantasy Star Ø	**8.0**	Sega	248	E10+
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Sky	**8.0**	Nintendo	248	E
Pokémon Platinum Version	**9.0**	Nintendo	241	E
Professor Layton and the Diabolical Box	**8.0**	Nintendo	246	E10+
Puzzle Quest: Galactrix	**8.0**	D3Publisher	240	E10+
Rabbids Go Home	**7.0**	Ubisoft	249	E
Rhythm Heaven	**9.0**	Nintendo	241	E
Roogoo Attack	**4.0**	SouthPeak	243	E
Sands of Destruction	**7.0**	Sega	250	T
Scribblenauts	**9.0**	Warner Bros.	247	E10+
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor	**8.0**	Atlus	244	T
Space Bust-A-Move	**7.0**	Taito	245	E
Space Invaders Extreme 2	**8.0**	Square Enix	248	E
Spore Hero Arena	**5.0**	Electronic Arts	247	E
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	**5.5**	LucasArts	249	E10+
Steal Princess	**6.0**	Atlus	241	E10+
Suikoden: Tierkreis	**7.0**	Konami	240	E10+
Super Robot Taisen OG Saga: Endless Frontier	**7.0**	Atlus	241	T
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Arcade Attack	**4.5**	Ubisoft	248	E10+
Tokyo Beat Down	**6.0**	Atlus	240	T
Touch Mechanic	**5.0**	Aspyr	241	E
TrackMania DS	**7.0**	Atlus	240	E
Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen	**7.0**	Activision	245	E10+
Valkyrie Profile: Covenant of the Plume	**9.0**	Square Enix	240	T
WireWay	**6.5**	Konami	249	E
A Witch's Tale	**4.0**	NIS America	247	E10+
The Wizard of Oz: Beyond the Yellow Brick Road	**6.5**	XSEED	246	E
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010	**7.0**	THQ	248	T
Zubo	**6.5**	Electronic Arts	240	E10+

MORE ON:

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: SPIRIT TRACKS

No matter how good a game is, it's rare for me to want to replay an adventure the size and scope of Spirit Tracks. But for whatever reason, I'm itching to pop this one back into the DS and give it another go. There are a lot of optional quests to make your stay in Hyrule even more fulfilling, and I love the touch-screen controls for using items, driving the train, and playing the flute. I'm ready to do it all again—I just have to pry the game away from my wife! —CHRIS SL.

COSPLAY

Legendary Cosplay

One fan's impressive array of Zelda-inspired costumes.

Given the assignment to read a book and craft something inspired by its contents for a high school English class, Jennifer Howard returned to class with an unlikely tome: the Nintendo Power player's guide for The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time. Her resulting Zelda costume led to another school-based cosplay opportunity: she created a costume of Marin from The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening during a sewing class. "While everyone else was making pillows and pajama pants, I was making Marin's dress," explains Howard.

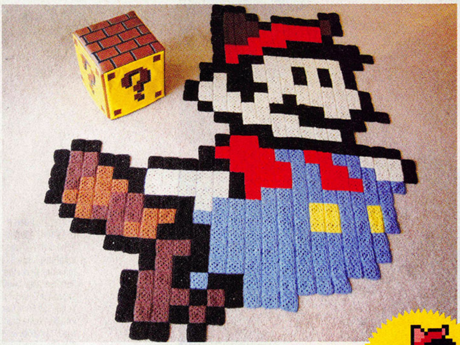
Now a 22-year-old art major and theater minor at Western Illinois University, Howard has built upon those formative experiences with a slew of gaming-inspired costumes—again with a strong focus on the Zelda series. Over the last few years, Howard says she's also assembled costumes based on Sheik and the Great Fairy from Ocarina of Time, Fierce Deity from Majora's Mask, and Princess Midna and the Great Fairy from Twilight Princess. Outside of that franchise, she's also created costumes of the titular hero from NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams, Marth from Super Smash Bros. Brawl, and characters from Pokémon and Yu-Gi-Oh!, among others.

Howard's costumes have won awards and numerous compliments at Midwest anime conventions, and she says each costume typically takes between 40 and 100 hours to complete, depending on the complexity of the task. "I don't have a sewing machine, so everything I make is hand-sewn or uses a little fabric glue, depending on what look I'm going for," she says, though she is currently saving up for a sewing machine to expedite the creation process.

Beyond her numerous costumes, Howard also frequently draws images from her favorite games, including the Legend of Zelda, Final Fantasy, and Pokémon series, and she even created a Triforce pendant (from The Legend of Zelda) out of copper, nickel, and brass during a metalworking and jewelry class.

What is it about the Zelda series that inspires Howard to create artwork and costumes? "I've had Zelda games ever since I was really little, and I don't think anything else in my life has had as much of an impact on my imagination or my art [as] that series," she says. "There is just something so beautiful about the Zelda games that makes me want to create beautiful things."

—ANDREW H.



FANDOM

Watch Your Step!

This Raccoon Mario rug is a labor of **love**.

Nintendo devotee Mindy Yan, 23, of Long Beach, CA, didn't have a clue how to crochet, so she hopped onto YouTube for a little DIY education. After only a few months of practice, she decided to make her boyfriend, Andrew, the coolest present ever: this large Raccoon Mario rug and a ? Block ottoman.

"I wanted to make something outrageously huge for my boyfriend's birthday," explains Yan. "We both love Super Mario Bros. 3 to death, and he's even more of a Mario fan than I am." Made out of 384 individually crocheted granny squares that were then hand-sewn together, the Raccoon Mario rug took a lot less time to make than Yan originally anticipated. For 15 days, she lived and breathed yarn. Still, something seemed missing when it was all finished, so she whipped together a vinyl ? Block slipcover for their ottoman.

"For those two weeks I pretty much had a ghost of a girlfriend in the living room, because she was so far into the zone," Andrew recalls. "I was so amazed that she could make something so awesome out of a bunch of string. It was definitely the best present I've ever received." —NATHAN M.

WRITE *your own* CAPTION

SCREEN TEST

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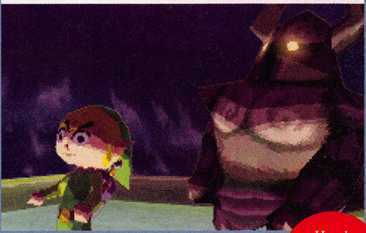
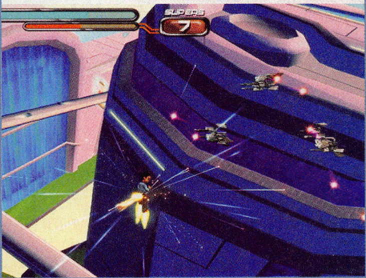
THIS MONTH'S SHOT



"Wait—Bruce Willis was dead the *whole time*?"

Here's our caption. THINK YOU CAN DO BETTER?

VOLUME 249'S SHOT



"Astro Boy is obviously a liar; his pants are on fire." —PAUL J.

"I guess Astro Boy didn't like the robo-flying toy surprises that came with his 'Supers 7' combo meal." —TRISKA

"Astro Boy didn't realize he grabbed a box of fireworks instead of a box of bullets." —THE ESSENCE OF THE TRIFORCE

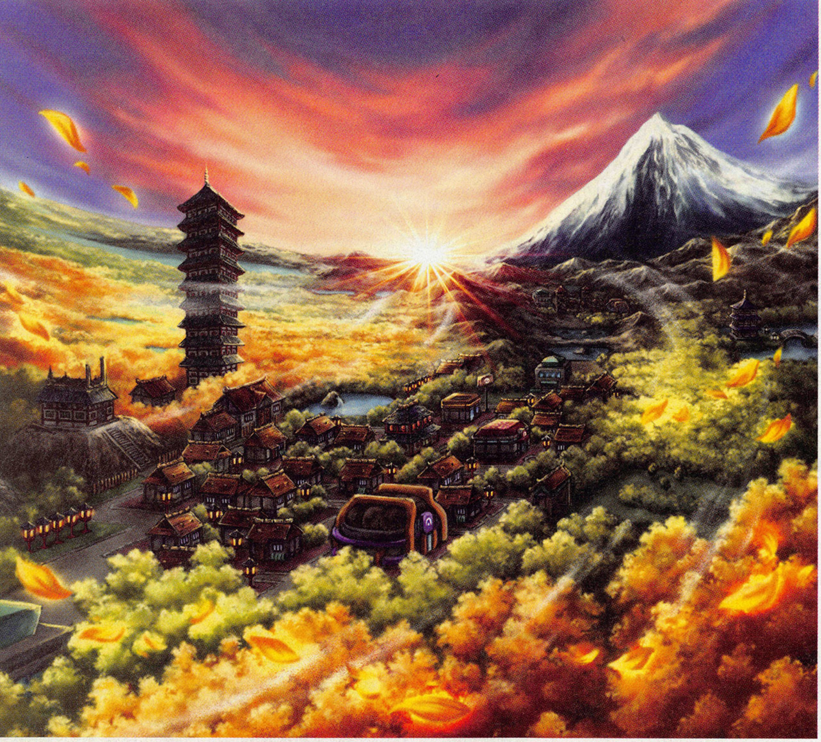
"Astro Boy was shocked when his ethanol-fueled jet pack started to shoot bits of popcorn out the exhaust pipes." —ALEC S.

"Little did Astro Boy know that when he drank 20 gallons of gas they meant *gas*, not petroleum gas." —WACKEDMCNEILLY

"Sorry, I just ate. Could we do this some other time?" —GANGSTA_1.0.7

ABOVE *and* BEYOND

Got art, cosplay, case mods, etc.? Send them to us via email to **community@nintendopower.com** or via snail mail to Nintendo Power/Community c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Court, STE 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. We'll print the best stuff!



If the above picture makes you yearn for another trip to the beautiful Johto region, you're in luck—we're heading there in just 30 days for the full story on Pokémon HeartGold and SoulSilver Versions! We'll also present the winners of the 2009 Nintendo Power Awards and deliver big reviews for top titles such as No More Heroes 2: Desperate Struggle!

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NEXT MONTH

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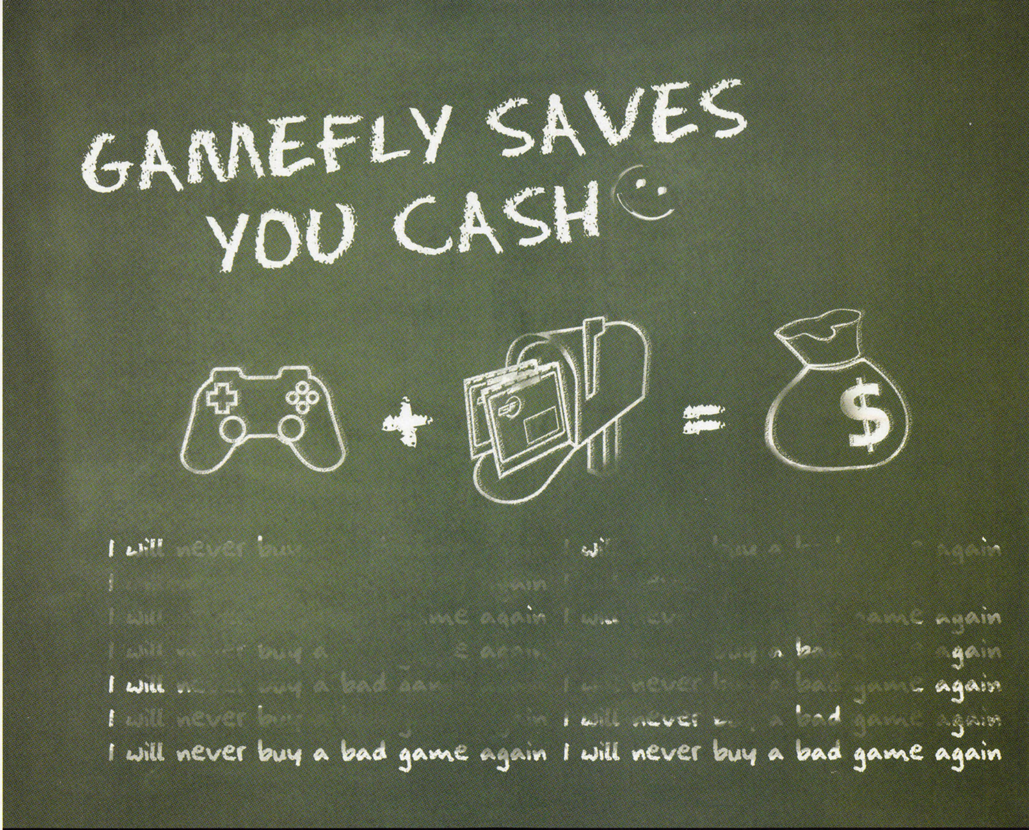
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NINTENDO DS

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Mild Language
Animated Blood
Fantasy Violence
Alcohol Reference
Mild Suggestive Themes

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